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DOCTRINE

AND

DOCTRINAL DISRUPTION

BEING AN EXAMINATION
OF THE INTELLECTUAL POSITION OF
THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

BY

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PREFACE

In the following work various allusions are made to the results of modern criticism on the evidential value of the Bible. I have avoided, in the text, all appearance of speaking of these on my own authority; and the examples I have employed to illustrate them have been taken from critics and scholars, many of them Anglicans themselves, all of them devout in their sympathies, and all of them well known to Anglican students. I wish, moreover, to remind the reader that these examples are cited, not as proofs of the results in question, but merely as illustrations of them, which is a very different thing. If the reader takes exception to the examples given by myself, he must be aware that criticism will supply him with an indefinite number of others, the purport of which is similar. I have refrained from any attempt at elaborating critical details, and have confined myself to calling

attention merely to results of the most general character; because I have desired to confine the discussion to the general facts of the situation, which are not affected by the minutiæ of critical controversy, and with regard to which Anglicans of all schools, as I have shown by quotations from their writings, are in substantial agreement.

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DOCTRINE AND DOCTRINAL DISRUPTION

CHAPTER I

On the want of perception amongst English Churchmen to-day that the true origin of all their existing dissensions is a certain new feature in the intellectual position of all of them.

The cause of the present crisis in the English Church is far deeper than is generally supposed.

ARISTOTLE says, and it is one of his most pregnant sayings, that revolutions arise *out of* little things, but not *about* little things. The revolutions to which Aristotle referred were revolutions in the world of politics; but his saying is equally applicable to revolutions in the world of religion; and never in the world of religion was there a more signal example of its truth than that which is afforded by the Church of England to-day. The Church of England in the year 1900 was—it was so asserted by all the parties comprised in it—passing through a crisis of a specially momentous kind. Ostensibly this crisis arose out of questions of mere ritual; and it amused certain hostile, and shocked certain friendly critics, because the gravity of it seemed to them so disproportionate to the triviality of its apparent cause. But such critics

were in error. The gravity of it was disproportionate to its apparent cause only; not to the real cause, which was a very different thing. It was not different only; it was also immeasurably deeper; and the most curious feature of the whole situation was the fact that not one of those whom the crisis affected most nearly, showed any adequate consciousness of what the real cause of it was.

The true cause is not really differences of opinion about ritual,

It is true, indeed, that the critics whose insight was most obviously at fault, and who were specially referred to in the observation that has just been made—those, namely, who imagined that the dissensions within the Church were due to nothing but a dispute about ceremonial practices—were merely a minority; and that the body of serious Churchmen admitted such practices in themselves to be matters of complete indifference, and to merit attention as things to be put down or maintained, solely on account of the doctrines which they are used to insinuate and to symbolise. These doctrines, moreover, are doubtless of extreme importance; and on former occasions, doubtless, they have sufficed to divide Christendom. But those who imagined that because their importance is extreme it would suffice

nor even about particular doctrines,

to explain the contest then rife in connection with them, were hardly nearer the truth than those who saw nothing in the matter but a childish squabble about lace frills and birettas, about the

right to swing a censer or play tricks with a candle. I have spoken of these events in the past tense; but they are not past. They are facts of to-day still; and as such they are dealt with in this volume.

What is really agitating the Established Church of this country is not, except in a secondary and derivative way, any question of what is commonly called doctrine at all. It is something which, in the logic of religion, lies as far below doctrines generally as the doctrines themselves lie below the ritual that expresses them. It will be my object here to explain what this something this—this one underlying problem, this great fundamental difficulty, which for every party in the English Church is the same, but which none of these parties as yet have looked fairly and steadily in the face.

but something much deeper. It is the object of the present work to show what this is.

For their not having done so, they have at all events one excuse. This problem, this difficulty, in a certain sense is new. It has indeed been shaping itself for the past four hundred years; but as a practical influence in the English Church generally, it can hardly be said to have existed for much more than forty. We need then, perhaps, be not more than moderately surprised that our Churchmen, though now they are daily being affected by it more and more, should not even yet have arrived at any clear recognition of its character. Though they thus fail, however, to under-

It has escaped the notice of English Churchmen hitherto, because not till lately has it become fully operative.

Yet our clergy in their controversies unconsciously indicate its nature.

stand their own position themselves, it will be by reference to the arguments and claims of their representative leaders that we best can give the reader a preliminary idea of the problem which these arguments and claims at once turn upon and ignore.

Let us first notice their constant appeal to the doctrines of the Reformers and the legal formularies of the Church.

Let us begin, then, by glancing at the manner in which the Anglican controversialists of to-day still unite in appealing to the historical facts of the Reformation. High Church, Low Church, and Broad Church leaders alike bury themselves in the details of English ecclesiastical history, and debate with much acuteness and much laborious learning what were the precise objects which certain divines and legislators consciously had in view some three hundred years ago. Did these individuals mean, in their formularies and their Acts of Parliament, to sanction such and such doctrines, and to forbid the teaching of others? And with regard to what points, and within what limits, did they mean to allow doctrinal teaching to vary? Every party within the Establishment, except that of the extreme Broad Churchmen, is eager, as we all know, in the discussion of these difficult questions; and such minute antiquarian controversy with regard to the theological opinions which were embodied or implied in the legislation of this country during a well-marked period of its

history, now far removed from us, would naturally seem to imply that all the parties concerned in it, however much they may differ in their respective tenets, agree in referring them to one common and official standard of orthodoxy. And in previous periods, when similar controversies have arisen, we shall find that such an inference would have been completely borne out by fact. There *was* a common standard of orthodoxy to which all the controversialists appealed, each claiming that his own tenets were sanctioned by it, and each staking his position in the English Church on their being so. But this condition of things has now ceased to exist. It has given place to another, which constitutes a new feature in the situation. Let us see how this is.

This no longer implies, as it did in former days, that our clergy have really a common standard of orthodoxy.

Though every party in the English Church to-day—including even the extreme Broad Churchmen—desires, so far as it can, to prove that its own doctrines are consistent with those embodied in the laws and formularies of the Reformation, it desires to do this for the practical reason only, that it thus will at once secure for itself a tolerable *modus vivendi*; but no party is prepared to give its own doctrines up, even if every historical expert and every legal authority should conclusively show that the laws and the formularies of the Reformation condemned them. Each party, under

They desire for reasons of convenience to show that their own doctrine is now condemned by the legal formularies of the Church;

but should it be proved to be so, instead of altering their doctrines, they would demand that the formularies should be altered.

circumstances such as these, would indeed admit that some kind of change was necessary; but each would maintain that the things requiring change were the laws and formularies, which should be made to accommodate themselves to the doctrines; not the doctrines, in order that they should accommodate themselves to the laws and formularies. That such is the conscious attitude of English Churchmen to-day, has been illustrated most

The Ritualistic party,

clearly, perhaps, by the party of the extreme sacerdotalists, who, speaking through their leader, Lord Halifax, have said with a courageous bluntness, that they will obey the rulings of the bishops, and the laws of the Church of England, only in so far as these agree with what the party in question regards as the doctrine and practice of the Christian

the Low Church party,

Church generally. But the Low Church party, though it may not so clearly say so, occupies a position which is logically just the same. For just as Lord Halifax and his friends demand that if the existing law has really been so framed as to condemn their doctrines and practices, it shall be altered and widened in such a way as to permit them, so are the Low Church party equally prepared to demand that if it be wide enough at present to permit them, it shall be narrowed till it unequivocally condemns them. That is to say, both parties are at one in recognising some standard

of orthodoxy essentially independent of that which was supplied by the divines of the Reformation and the Acts of reforming Parliaments. Of the Broad Church party in this connection it is hardly necessary to speak; its position coincides so obviously with that of the other two. If at present it acquiesces in the existing Anglican formularies with greater placidity than the leaders of the English Church Union, this is not because it regards their authority with any greater reverence, but because it experiences less inconvenience in evading them.

and the Broad Church party are all in this respect in the same position.

Theoretically, of course, the principle which underlies this attitude has always been that of the English Church from the beginning; for there never has been a time when the most loyal and submissive of its members would have denied that he submitted to it because he believed its teaching to accord with truth which rested on external and independent evidence, or would have ventured to affirm that he believed any of its doctrines to be true because their truth had been vouched for by an Act of some English Parliament. But practically, though not theoretically, till comparatively recent times, the belief of English Churchmen did, as a fact, rest on the latter rather than on the former of these two mental processes. The primary doctrines and the historical evidences of Chris-

Theoretically, this was always the position of Anglicans. They always had some authority beyond the legal formularies of the Church;

but practically, till a recent period, they regarded the formularies as having settled the limits of doctrine finally.

tianity were, of course, referred by them to sources external to the authority of the Reformers; but so much being taken for granted, what they did assume was this—that of the many interpretations of which the primary doctrines were susceptible, and of the many deductions that might be drawn from the historical evidences, the English Church definitely, and once for all, had selected those which reason showed to be true, and in doing so had placed them for ever outside the limits of controversy. Within these limits opinion was free to vary, and the room for variation was considerable; but if any Anglican were convicted of going beyond them, his own principles would condemn him, not less than those of his censors.

That such was the case is shown by the care taken by the Tractarians and early Broad Churchmen to show that their teaching did not legally contradict the Articles,

This fact finds illustration in the very curious casuistry by which firstly the Tractarians, and secondly the pioneers of the Broad Church movement, sought to reconcile their teaching with that of the Thirty-nine Articles. The Tractarians were driven to devise a theory that those doctrines of the English Church, an adhesion to which is absolutely binding on its members, though they are defined and limited by its written and legally sanctioned formularies, are defined and limited by the words of these formularies only—not by the precise meaning which was in the minds of those who composed them, but only by such meanings as

the rules of grammar and language will allow theologians on other grounds to read into them. And this theory, which was devised by the school of Newman and Pusey, was practically adopted, though for very different ends, by the school of which Jowett was one of the most brilliant leaders. It is a theory the rise of which distinctly marks the beginning of a new intellectual stage in the life of the Church of England. In itself, indeed, it belongs essentially to the logic of experiment and transition; but it thus serves all the better to emphasise the character of the period which preceded its introduction, as well as of that which is succeeding it. For its object, as used by the schools alike of Pusey and Jowett, being to facilitate the promulgation of doctrines within the fold of the Church of England which the original meaning of the Articles might be reasonably held to prohibit, it yet treated the Articles with a grave and anxious reverence, as though the whole of the Christian verity were somehow caged in their sentences. The obvious impossibility that either of these two schools could have really felt for the Articles this sort of reverence themselves, shows how strong such reverence must have been in the Church generally, since it could force men of a naturally honest disposition into reasonings which with none of them were much better than sophis-

which shows how strong was the general respect in which the Articles were held; for they were certainly not held in respect by the High Church or Broad Church innovators themselves.

try, and which not a few of them must have felt uneasily to be worse.

But the whole situation is now in this respect changed.

And now let us turn from the days when the general temper of the Church made such conduct on the part of certain minorities necessary. Let us turn from those days to our own, and let us compare the two. The change is so great that the most careless observer must be struck by it. The intellectual casuistry of the schools of Pusey and Jowett has by this time played out its part, and is discarded, for it is no longer necessary. The revolt against the Articles as an absolute rule of doctrine has ceased to be distinctive of any party; it has practically become general; and it hides itself no longer under a logical counterfeit of submission to them. For the last twenty years, if it has not been generally proclaimed, it has at all events been generally implied; and nothing shows this more clearly than the character of the existing crisis.

This general reverence for the Articles has disappeared altogether.

That this is so is illustrated by two writers dealing with the Lambeth judgment,

If we want to understand the manner in which it does so, we cannot do better than turn to the words of two recent writers who desire to minimise rather than to exaggerate its importance, and who expressed their views on the matter in a well-known monthly review, shortly after the delivery of the Archbishop's judgment at Lambeth.[1]

[1] See *Nineteenth Century*, October 1899.

The writers in question, Dr. Cobb and Mr. George Russell, are in striking agreement with regard to one point, so much so that in dealing with it they use almost the same words. "*There was no crisis*" at all in the Church of England, says Dr. Cobb, "*before the* 31*st of July* 1899, *in spite of all the scare headings in the newspapers.*" Down to the time of the delivery of the Lambeth judgment the crisis, says Mr. Russell, was a thing which he "*steadily refused to believe in. But now*," he proceeds, "*in its strictest sense, . . . it has arrived; and it was created by the Archbishop of Canterbury on the* 31*st of July.*" Their agreement, however, in the reasons that drew from them this common statement is more important than their agreement in the mere statement itself. When they say that the crisis was created by the Archbishop's judgment, they both explain that they say this because the judgment has had the effect of endowing with new vitality a conception of the English Church which for years had become practically obsolete. Its condemnation of incense, says Dr. Cobb, was a relatively trifling matter. Its great result was to emphasise "*in a hard, and even harsh manner, the bondage in which the Church of the present is under to the Church of the past*"; and to show a generation, which had been allowed to forget and to disregard the fact,

who both say that it produced the present crisis in the Church by insisting on the legally binding character of the Articles, which the whole Church had by this time learnt to disregard.

"*that nothing is legally permitted in the Church of England to-day save what is expressly permitted in an Act of Parliament passed three hundred and forty years ago.*" Herein lies the reason, says Dr. Cobb and Mr. Russell likewise, why the Archbishop's judgment produced a definite crisis. This, however, in itself is not a sufficient explanation. Something more needs to be added to it; and this Dr. Cobb gives us. The judgment produced a crisis not simply because it forced the present generation of Churchmen to remember the obedience which legally is still due from them to the Churchmen of a distant past, but also because during the period for which they have been allowed to forget it their views have changed and developed with such an unexampled rapidity that they can no longer be accommodated to the old rules and restrictions; and hence, to quote Dr. Cobb's striking admission, the judgment has produced a crisis because "*it has forced Churchmen to look with open eyes at the great gulf which has yawned between the theoretical foundation of the Church of England and the actual facts of to-day.*"

Here, then, is the feature of the situation to be first considered:

Here, then, is the one great feature of the existing situation on which I desire, as a preliminary, to fix the reader's attention. Every section of the Church, in spirit, if not in practice,

has outgrown its reliance on those divines of the sixteenth century whose doctrines the English law still technically imposes on it. The Ritualists and the Broad Churchmen are in this position avowedly —they both seek to justify their respective interpretations of Christianity by reference to authorities quite outside the Anglican Articles and independent of them; and the Low Church and moderate sections, in defending themselves against the doctrines of the extremists, are driven into occupying a ground which in this respect is the same as theirs. They may defend the Articles on the ground that they agree with their own beliefs. They no longer defend their beliefs on the ground that they agree with the Articles. Bishop Gore, for example, who, though he is no doubt a High Churchman, is nevertheless a High Churchman of a very moderate kind, and desires to claim for the Articles as much authority as he can, was reduced to declaring that they were never meant to be final; that the stage of thought which they represent was a stage of "*transition and movement*," not of "*settlement*"; that "*they were not intended as definite solutions*" at all; and that they "*aimed at shelving rather than at defining questions.*" In fact, with regard to all points that were then in controversy, they had, he maintains, the merit, for which we ought to be "*thankful*," of "*appear-*

all Anglican parties alike have outgrown their old reliance on the Anglican formularies.

Even the most conservative Churchmen try to explain the authority of the Articles away.

ing to say much, and in fact saying little." We may be thankful for this, he explained, because the Church at the time of the Reformation had not "*the materials at its disposal for understanding the early history of Christian doctrine*"; and it is consequently probable that its definitions with regard to disputed questions were saved from being wrong only by being indefinite. Thus, Bishop Gore continued, "*however unsatisfactory the Articles are positively as statements of truth, they are satisfactory in what they are not.*" Or, to sum the matter up, the creeds being assumed as a basis, the Church of England to-day is free to believe and to teach anything which "*the help of clearer knowledge*"[1] may lead it to regard as the content of true and uncorrupted Christianity. Such is the teaching of the moderate High Churchman of to-day; and that the Low Church party is on practically similar grounds, claiming for itself a similar or an even greater freedom, may be shown with equal clearness by quotations from its leading thinkers. At the present moment, however, it is unnecessary to add their testimony, as we shall have abundant opportunity of considering it later on.

All Anglican parties are appealing to, waiting for, some rule of faith different from and wider than that supplied by the Anglican Church as established in the time of the Reformation.

It is difficult to describe a movement of this

[1] For the view of the Articles, and the phrases and sentences quoted, see *The Mission of the Church*, by Charles Gore, M.A., pp. 49 and 50.

kind without using phrases to which some readers may take exception. It is quite sufficient, however, for the purpose of our present argument, that the description which has just been given should be true in its most general outlines; and that it is true so far, at all events, every English Churchman will admit. The broad fact which it indicates he will recognise as quite familiar to him.

We will next consider the consequences of this fact.

Such being the case, we will proceed to consider its consequences, which, far from being familiar to English Churchmen as a whole, are suspected by only a few of them, and appear to be understood by none.

CHAPTER II

The new feature in their intellectual position indicated by the desire of all parties to appeal from the decisions of the Reformers to ultimate proofs and authorities. The importance of this appeal illustrated by the growth of doctrinal differences.

The fact that the English Church is outgrowing the formularies of the Reformation, has, for its first logical consequence,

To sum up again what has been said in the preceding chapter, the Church of England generally, as a body of thinking Christians, is outgrowing its traditional reliance on the doctrines and formularies of the Reformation, as final authorities with regard to Christian truth. Why this is so we need not yet inquire particularly. It will be enough for the moment to observe in passing, that it is due to causes which are affecting all thought similarly, and in every direction are forcing it to expand and move. That such is the case, moreover, all parties in the Church not only feel in private, but avow and proclaim openly. What, then, are those consequences which they neither avow nor feel, and which to all appearances they do not even suspect? They are a train of consequences cul-

minating in one consequence that is supreme; and what we will now do is to take them in their logical order.

The first consequence, then, of this moral and intellectual expansion which is making the Church of England realise that the doctrines and formularies of the Reformation cannot be accepted as infallible, still less as final authorities, is to invest with an importance not previously recognised the question of who and what the final authorities are. For it is obviously idle for any party whatsoever to attempt either to justify its own doctrines to itself, or defend them against the doctrines of any party opposed to it, unless it has some standard of truth, more or less definite, by which it differentiates true doctrine from false. Thus, for all parties in the English Church to-day, the first question logically is not, What doctrines do I believe? but, On what authority, or on what grounds, do I believe them? The question itself, indeed,—to repeat what has been said already,—is so far from being new, that it has formed, from the beginning of Christianity, the believer's logical starting-point; but it has, as obtruded on the English Church to-day, a prominence and an urgency which are new, not certainly in theory, but in practice; and it is being asked—we have here a point which is more distinctive still—it is being asked, and it

to force on its members the question, so long lain to sleep, of who and what the authorities for its doctrines are.

This question is practically new to-day, on account of the new prominence it has assumed and the new conditions under which it is asked.

has to be answered, under absolutely new conditions.

Let us consider the new prominence and new urgency of the question first, which are matters not for controversy, but mere observation of facts; and the new conditions under which it is asked we will consider by themselves afterwards. Its prominence is evidenced by the references which are now so constantly made by Anglican divines, of all parties alike, to the ultimate proofs or authorities on which Christian doctrine rests. Its urgency is evidenced by the nature of the doctrinal conclusions, startlingly different from one another, which, from the proofs or authorities, explicitly or implicitly appealed to by them, our Anglican divines and controversialists of different schools are drawing.

Its new prominence is evidenced in all the controversy of to-day, by the frequency of the references made to it.

Beginning, then, with their references to ultimate proofs and authorities—proofs and authorities other than the decisions of the Reformers—we shall not only find that these are more persistent and anxious than they ever hitherto have been since the decisions of the Reformers were arrived at, but we shall find also that, instead of being used, as formerly, to show how true and how final these revered decisions were, they are now used to modify, to supplement, or to supersede them. That such is the case with regard to two classes of Anglicans—the more advanced of the High and

the more advanced of the Broad Churchmen—is a fact so notorious that it hardly requires to be emphasised. Amongst Anglicans, however, of a more moderate type, and especially amongst the members of the great Low Church party, this new appeal to authorities independent of the English Reformation, though it is no less a fact, is a fact that is less generally realised. It shall be therefore to the utterances of the Low Church party that we will go for a particular illustration of the way in which the matter stands.

not only by Ritualistic and Broad Church innovators,

For this purpose we will take a volume of essays,[1] entitled *Church and Faith*, which was avowedly issued as a kind of Low Church manifesto, and which expressly deals with the position of the Church at the present moment. The essays are written by different well-known thinkers, including Dr. Wace, Dr. Wright, and the Dean of Canterbury; and the Preface which introduces them is contributed by the Bishop of Hereford. This volume discloses, in a most striking way, the fact that the writers, whilst they all agree in upholding the principles of the Reformation as understood by themselves, and opposing them to those of sacerdotalism whether in its Anglican or Roman forms, not only go behind

but by the conservative Low Church party; as a recent volume of essays, called *Church and Faith*, will show us.

[1] *Church and Faith, Being Essays on the Teaching of the Church of England.* Blackwood, 1899.

This whole volume is pervaded with the assumption that the authorities for Christian doctrine are to be sought for outside the formulæ of the Reformation.

the Reformation in order to support their doctrines, and argue their whole case anew from the very beginning; but also declare that the authority on which their doctrines rest to-day, is an authority which in many respects was unknown and inaccessible to the Reformers. They agree, indeed, with the Reformers, that the basis of this authority is the Bible; but they maintain that the Reformers, in consequence of the inevitable limitations of their epoch, could understand the Bible only in a provisional and partial way. Thus, in the essay entitled *The Catholic Church*[1] the writer declares that "*the elaborate statements of theological belief in which the Reformation was so fertile*," and of which, as his first example, he cites the Anglican Articles, were framed and put forward in accordance with a wholly mistaken notion of what the true principle of Christian unity was. The kind of unity which the Articles aimed at securing is recognised, he says, by the modern world as impossible; and although the true meaning of the Bible is as authoritative now as ever, we must discover what its meaning is by practically new methods. What methods he has in view we need not yet pause to inquire. They are, at all events, methods which take us back to what he regards as the beginning of things, and leave Anglican authority, as such,

[1] *Church and Faith*, see pp. 148–149.

wholly on one side. The spirit which breathes in the passage here referred to is typical of the spirit which pervades the entire volume, as we can see by turning to the Bishop of Hereford's Preface to it. The Oxford Movement, says the Bishop, though it was fraught with many mischievous consequences, and contained in it the seeds of a deplorable "*ritualistic sacerdotalism*," has, at the same time, "*widened and enriched*" the life of the Church of England by introducing into it "*a higher conception of the Church as a continuous and world-wide society of believers*,"[1] and has thus taken away from it its old insular character. This expanded conception of the Church, however, does not, he is careful to let us know, imply any approximation to the doctrines or organisation of Rome, with all its "*retrograde*" tendencies and its hampering burden of tradition. On the contrary, he says, "*our first duty, as we examine the basis of our faith, is to clear the mind from the influence of presuppositions*"; not to allow, when we are appealing to "*the rock of Holy Scripture*," "*inherited traditions*," to obscure or deflect our judgment; but to do what, he says, the essayists of the present volume have desired to do—"*To set forth the truths of the Gospel, and the history and principles of our Church, as they have come to be*

This is stated with special clearness by the Bishop of Hereford in his Preface,

who tells us we must study the proofs of Christianity in the light of modern knowledge.

[1] *Church and Faith*, p. 9.

read, and must in future be read, in the light of modern knowledge, and by those methods of dispassionate study which are now accepted as the only sure and safe guides to truth, whether in history or theology, or any other branch of learning." [1]

To multiply examples of similar language would be needless. The above statements, taken as they are from a volume avowedly and essentially representative of contemporary Low Church thought, are enough to show that the most conservative of our Anglican parties is seeking, not less than the parties that are most advanced, to base its doctrines on authorities independent of traditional Anglicanism, and considers the appeal to such authorities as vital to its whole position.

But the new importance possessed by the question of the ultimate authority for Christian doctrine, is shown most clearly by the growing diversity which doctrinal teaching in the English Church exhibits.

The practical importance, however, which this question of authority possesses for Anglicans of all parties to-day, is illustrated even more forcibly by the character of their distinctive doctrines than it is by their conscious appeals to the grounds on which they defend and hold them. Certain doctrinal differences have, we all of us know, always existed within the pale of the English Church, as the old and familiar antithesis of High Church and Low Church testifies; but the differ-

[1] *Church and Faith*, p. 10.

ences to-day are not only becoming more accentuated; they are also growing in number, and are assuming a novel character. Their growth in number is sufficiently evidenced by the fact that instead of being divided, as it once was, into two parties only, the Church of England is now divided into four, the High Church and the Low Church parties being supplemented by the Broad Church and the Ritualistic; and that these differences, whilst growing in number, have become more accentuated also, can be seen by a brief glance at the views which the four parties severally hold with regard to some of the fundamental problems of Christianity.

For example, as to the question of what the Christian Church is,

Let us take first the question of what the Christian Church is, and of how we are to know what bodies belong or do not belong to it. The moderate High Churchman, such, for example, as Canon Gore, replies that one indubitable sign, at all events, by which we may know whether a body forms part of the Christian Church or not, is its possession or non-possession of the Apostolic Succession amongst its ministers. Christ, Canon Gore maintains, has made it perfectly evident that the Apostolic Succession was essential to the Church He founded; but "*the Church of England*," Canon Gore goes on to say, "*does not require any exact or explicit expression of belief in regard to*

Anglicans of different schools give us four conflicting answers.

it."[1] The reply of the Ritualist agrees with that of the moderate High Churchman, except that it goes on, and grows most emphatic, where that of the latter ceases. The Apostolic Succession is essential, it says, to any true branch of the Church, and furthermore is essential for a most definite and vital reason. It is essential because by its means, and by its means alone, the clergy are invested with a species of miraculous power which enables them to renew the sacrifice of Christ's actual body and blood.

Let us next proceed to consider the reply of the Low Churchman. For this we will consult again the volume already referred to. We find several descriptions there of what the Christian Church is; but they lack precision except for the one statement that the true centre of unity is the conscious dependence for salvation, of the individual on Christ as his God and Saviour.[2] But if the writers show some want of precision in their doctrine of what the Church is, there is no uncertainty at all in their doctrine of what the Church is not; and what it is not, is, according to them, the very thing that the High Churchman and the Ritualist say that it essentially is. It is not a body with a ministry to

[1] *The Mission of the Church*, by Canon Gore. Murray, 1892. See p. 51.

[2] See *Church and Faith*, p. 150.

which Apostolic Succession is essential. It is not a body which, except for accidental reasons, stands in need of a ministerial class at all. Modern research, one of the writers tells us, reinforces in this respect the traditional Low Church view; and he quotes, in support of his statement, the declaration of Bishop Lightfoot that "*the Kingdom of Christ, not being a kingdom of this world, is not limited by the restrictions that fetter other societies*"; that, "*above all, it has no sacerdotal system*," and that "*it imposes no sacrificial tribe or class between God and man*";[1] whilst the Bishop of Hereford declares that "*the doctrine of a divinely ordered priestly authority*" is precisely the error that "*the Reformation really banished from our Church.*"[2]

And now, lastly, from the Low let us turn to the Broad Churchman, and see what sort of reply our question will receive from him, and how it will compare with the others we have been just considering. He will tell us that in one sense these others are all true; and he will tell us that in one sense these others are all false. They are true if we regard them as belonging to the symbolism of the past; they are false if we regard them as purporting to express any actual fact. The sacerdotal theory was a means by which, in an ignorant age,

[1] *Church and Faith*, p. 151. [2] *Ibid.* p. xv.

the Christian world represented to itself certain spiritual verities. The repudiation of this theory was the means, in a similar way, by which other spiritual verities, in danger of being forgotten, were re-vindicated; but the repudiation of the theory has, in its literal sense, as little meaning for the world to-day as the assertion of it. The essential elements of Christianity, as we are at length coming to understand it, are not necessarily associated with Christian belief at all; and the conception of the Church presented to us by the Low Church party—the conception of it as some privileged and mystically united body, comprehending all who believe that Christ is God, but rigidly exclusive of all who do not believe—is as obsolete and as spiritually inefficient as the doctrine of the Mass itself. In conclusion, the Broad Churchman might accurately sum up his position by appropriating the following words of one of the Low Church essayists: "*Of all heresies the greatest and the most deadly is that which would limit God's revelation of Himself to one age, or to one type of character, or to one system of thought.*"[1]

Theology in the Church of England is therefore in such a condition that, with regard to the very question of what the Church is, the theologians of its various parties, with equal unction and confi-

[1] *Church and Faith*, p. 161.

dence, are severally confronting each other with such statements as these :—

1. It is a fundamental and demonstrable certainty, that Christ in founding the Church established a perpetual priesthood endowed with miraculous powers.

2. It is a fundamental certainty—and whatever else may be doubtful, modern knowledge is making it increasingly clear—that Christ abolished the institution of a special priesthood altogether.

3. No Communion is part of the true Church which cannot feed its members with Christ's actual body and blood.

4. The doctrine that Christ's body and blood can be thus fed on by anybody is a blasphemous and damnable fable, not a trace of which is to be found in the ideas and the writings of the Apostles.

5. Whether this doctrine is to be found, or is not to be found, in the ideas and writings of the Apostles, is a question the importance of which is purely historical and relative ; for not only the Apostles, but even Christ himself, were conditioned by the limitations of the age in which they lived ; and whatever may have been their formal teaching, its form is by this time obsolete, and the vital truths contained in it must be expressed in new terms.

These differences of doctrine have, in the foregoing account of them, been understated rather than exaggerated, as will appear in another moment; and, so far as regards the Ritualistic and the Low Church parties at all events, the Bishop of Hereford admits that to exaggerate them is hardly possible. The "*cleavage*" between these two parties, he says, "*is, when carefully examined, found to be a fundamental cleavage. To ignore this or to minimise it in a spirit of temporising opportunism is little short of infidelity.*"[1] But, though the Bishop does not say so, the cleavage between the Low Church and the Broad Church, whilst equally fundamental, is incomparably more startling. In order to realise this, let us turn from the question of the Church to two others of a less general but yet more primary character, namely, the manner in which the world is redeemed by Christ, and the nature of Christ as resembling and as differing from that of other men.

There are even greater differences with regard to even more important doctrines—e.g. the nature of the Redemption and the nature of Christ himself.

As regards the Redemption, the points at issue between the High Church and the Low Church parties, however important, are of so recondite and technical a kind that the ordinary reader might find some difficulty in apprehending them. But though their respective doctrines are no

As to the Redemption, there has always been a difference between the High and Low Churchmen;

[1] *Church and Faith*, p. 12.

doubt widely different, they resemble one another at all events in one most important point. They both assume that the justification or redemption of man is the result of some stupendous and transcendental mystery—some mysterious payment which God the Son, by His agony, made for men of a debt which they never could have discharged themselves. Thus the High Church and Low Church parties differ upon some common ground. But the Broad Church party not only differs from both; it also takes its stand on a totally different plane. The entire conception of a mysterious sacrifice and oblation—of the shedding of God's blood to appease the claims of His justice—is relegated by this Broad Church party to the limbo of outworn philosophies. If it is not categorically repudiated, it is systematically and ostentatiously ignored, as a conception to which the intellect can no longer give harbour; and Christ is represented as having redeemed man, not by His divine sacrifice, but by His sublime human example—by showing us God, not by being God or by appeasing God. In fact, from Broad Church theology, the literal Godhead of Christ, with all the doctrines dependent on it, entirely disappears and evaporates; and, as we shall see hereafter, even the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection are practically invested by it

but with the rise of the Broad Church party a new difference of a far more profound kind has developed itself,

which practically introduces a new conception of Christianity altogether.

with the character of pious legends. Nor, indeed, does the process of Broad Church thought end here. As it dealt with the orthodox conception of God the Son, so it tends to deal with the conception of God the Father. It was one of the most distinguished of the Broad Churchmen of Oxford who gave utterance to the memorable saying that the great object now of religious thought "*is to defæcate the idea of God to a pure transparency*"; and if it is not every Broad Churchman who would commit himself to such language as this, the essential object of Broad Church thought as a whole is to reduce Christianity to a Theism specialised only by the belief that the character of the Deity has reflected itself in the moral life of Christ.

The magnitude of these differences is obvious;

These differences of doctrine within the pale of the Church of England are of a magnitude so great and obvious that there is no need to insist on it; but the fact to which I desire to direct the reader's attention here is not the mere fact of their magnitude, but a further fact to which this magnitude points. The magnitude of the differences between the doctrinal conclusions of our various Church parties is such as to show they must be due, largely if not entirely, to corresponding differences in the premises from which the various parties derive them. For the divines of all these parties

but it is here important mainly for the further fact to which it points—

are, we may assume, equally honest; they are equally anxious to discover and teach pure Christian truth; and, whatever may be the case with individuals, the parties, taken as parties, are approximately equal in their learning, and their powers of reasoning logically. The differences, therefore, between their conclusions must depend, largely at all events, on the fact that each school starts with some different conception of what the authorities and proofs are, from which the doctrines of Christianity are derived and by which their truth is established. Since, then, all parties, as we have seen, agree that the Church of England can no longer rest content with the authorities and proofs which contented the Reformers of the sixteenth century, but must check, correct, supplement, and even supersede them, by an appeal to others which are at once older and newer; and since, moreover, the results of this modern appeal are such as to show that the various parties who make it, differ, not because they reason with different degrees of acuteness from the same premises, but because they reason with similar acuteness from different premises; it is evident that logically the great fundamental question which is shaking and dividing the Church of England to-day, is not a question relating to the particular doctrines which the different parties within the Church severally and

the fact, namely, of the differences in the Church to-day as to the fundamental question of the authority from which all doctrine is to be derived.

distinctively hold; but it is a question of the rule of faith—of what are the ultimate grounds on which all or any doctrines are to be accepted by us and received as true. This condition of things, even as thus far described, is new; but the principal elements in its novelty have not yet been so much as alluded to. These we shall consider presently; but we must, in order to approach them, consider first another strange fact in the situation.

CHAPTER III

On the fact that, though all parties are appealing to ultimate authorities, they none of them realise the full importance of the appeal, or the intellectual circumstances of the present day, which condition it.

THE fact referred to at the close of the preceding chapter is this. Though each party in the English Church realises the importance, so far as its own doctrines are concerned, of basing them on some final authority, and supporting them by some method of argument, which shall commend themselves to the knowledge and intellect of the modern world; and though each party, as we have seen, makes frequent and confident mention of what its authorities and its methods of argument are, each party is, in connection with this question, guilty of a singular intellectual negligence. It realises the importance of its authorities and argumentative methods so far as these are connected with its own particular doctrines; but it fails to recognise the importance of the relation between its own premises and the corresponding but dissimilar

Now before going further we must pause to note one curious point;

namely, that each Anglican party, though it feels the question of authority to be important, does not recognise its importance adequately.

premises of the other parties who differ from it. Each party, in building up its own system of theology, assumes its premises, instead of analysing and defending them, and remains content with the task of arguing that, these premises being assumed, its own special doctrines follow from them. Indeed, this task so completely absorbs its attention that it practically forgets, when controverting the conclusions of its opponents, that the premises from which its opponents start are not the same as its own, and that if their conclusions are to be disproved, it is their premises that must be dealt with first. I do not say that any party is forgetful of this theoretically. They all remember it, but they remember it inadequately; or, in other words, they forget it practically. They forget it to such good purpose that in the Anglican controversy of to-day the question of authority, of proofs, and of first premises hardly makes its appearance as a disputed point at all.

This is shown very clearly by the manner in which the Bishop of Hereford and others declare the teaching of the Ritualists to be indistinguishable from that of Rome.

That such is the case is illustrated in the most striking way by a certain current assertion which is made and believed so widely, that the country has lately been, and indeed still is, convulsed by it. This is the assertion that the Ritualistic party are, in everything but name, Romanists. It is an assertion which is not made only by comparatively ignorant persons, who are the victims of prejudice,

or who deliberately set themselves to rouse it. It is made also, calmly, gravely, and in perfect good faith, by earnest theologians who carefully weigh their words. It is made, for example, by the Bishop of Hereford in his Preface to *Church and Faith*; where he mentions as a fact, which is obviously beyond dispute, that the "*sacerdotalism*" of the Ritualistic party "*is in essentials hardly distinguishable from that of the Roman Church.*" The Bishop, and the multitude whose opinion the Bishop expresses, entirely forget that it differs from that of Rome in what is the most fundamental and essential point of all. They entirely forget that Anglican sacerdotalism not only does not share, but emphatically and even petulantly rejects, the theory of authority on which the whole Roman system rests—that is to say, the assumption that the Roman Church is infallible. And similarly the Ritualists, in arguing against their Broad Church and Low Church opponents, make constant appeals to the teaching of what they call the Catholic Church, but take no effective account of the fact that the Catholic Church is something which they and their opponents define in very different ways; and they fail to specify accurately what their own definition is. It is, indeed, the tendency of all parties in the English Church equally, to assume, and to describe

The Ritualists, in attacking the Low Churchmen, show us the same thing.

Each party attends to its own theory of authority, but does not compare it with the theories adopted by the others.

only in general and allusive terms, the authorities and proofs which form the grounds of their respective doctrines; and then, though each party is conscious, and though each frequently admits, that its own premises differ from those of the others, they argue as though the premises of all parties were the same.

Let us therefore, as the next step in our argument, proceed to do for our controversialists what they do so imperfectly for themselves. Let us describe these premises from which respectively the various sections of them argue—their salient features can be identified and described easily—and setting them side by side, let us consider how they differ from one another.

Let us set these theories side by side.

We shall find them four in number.

We shall find that, with regard to the authorities from which true Christian doctrine is derived, and the proofs by which it is substantiated, there are held within the English Church four clearly distinguishable theories. According to one theory, which is that of the so-called Romanising Ritualists, true Christian doctrine rests on and is proved by the Bible as unanimously and increasingly understood by all branches of the Catholic Church, from the earliest ages till the latest. According to another theory, which is that of the moderate High Churchmen, it rests on and is proved by the Bible as understood by the Catholic Church, not

throughout its whole history, but during the first period of its existence, when the words and the character of its Founder were still a living memory. According to a third party, which is distinctively that of the Low Churchmen, true Christian doctrine rests on and is proved by the Bible as understood through devout study by each individual Christian, he being guided and helped by the best knowledge accessible to him. And finally, there is a fourth theory—the theory of the Broad Churchmen—according to which true Christian doctrine rests on and is proved by—what? According to this theory also, it rests on and is proved by the Bible—and the Bible as interpreted by the devout study of the individual; but it differs from the preceding theory, and it differs from all the others, in the different view it presents to us of what the Bible is. All the other theories, the Low Church theory especially, assume the Bible to be a book the value of which is unique, not only in degree but in kind. According to the Broad Church theory its value is unique in degree only, other sacred books belonging to other religions revealing God to us in an analogous but less satisfactory way. Thus, though the Broad Church theory so far resembles the Low Church that it bases Christian truth on the individual's study of the Bible, it assumes the Bible to be a book of the

highest spiritual stimulation, but does not assume it, as the Low Church theory does, to be a book of any exclusive or absolute doctrinal instruction. The entire position of the Broad Churchmen, in fact, differs from the position of the other three parties so greatly that hereafter we shall be obliged to consider it by itself. The full extent of the difference, however, we may ignore at the present moment; and we may, for the purpose of a preliminary comparison, consider the theories of all the parties together.

They are all theories of how to interpret the Bible and maintain its authority:

Now in one respect—though even here within limits only — we shall find that, despite their differences, all the parties agree. They agree that one of the authorities for Christian truth, and one of the proofs of it, is the Bible. The only differences between them which need now concern us are differences with respect to the authority by which the Bible is to be interpreted. In our present comparison, therefore, the Bible, being a common element, will cancel out, and we may confine ourselves to the means of interpretation. It will appear, accordingly, that within the pale of the Church of England, Christian truth is held to be defined, interpreted, and guaranteed by the following four authorities, which are of mutually inconsistent kinds:—

1. The unanimous consent of the Church during all periods of its existence.

2. The doctrines and practices of the Church during the earliest periods of its existence.

3. The individual studying the Bible as the only inspired book.

4. The individual studying the Bible as the best of inspired books.

No doubt this synopsis has the defect, inseparable from its brevity, of omitting from each theory many qualifying and essential details: but though it does not give all the features of each which are essential, it does give in each case the essential features which are distinctive; and it is quite sufficiently accurate to show at a single glance what the problem is, how urgent the problem is, and how fundamental the problem is, which our Anglican controversialists of all parties are overlooking. It makes one fact evident—a fact which has been already insisted on—that it is utterly useless for them to discuss final conclusions when differences so great as the foregoing exist with respect to the premises. Before their conclusions can have any controversial weight, their premises —their theories of authority—must all be minutely analysed; the nature of the conclusions which can be legitimately drawn from each—the exactness of them, the degree of certainty—must be considered with the utmost care; and all must be brought forward into the full light of day, so that those

and these four theories are all so different,

that it is obviously necessary first to see which, if any of them, is true, before it is possible to discuss satisfactorily what conclusions can be drawn from them.

who are invited to accept them may realise what each is worth.

But how is it that this obvious fact has been overlooked?

If, however, all this is as evident as it has just been seen to be—if the importance of this question of authority be really what has just been stated—it will naturally be asked for what possible reason our controversialists have, as we have seen they have, so strangely overlooked it hitherto. The answer to such an inquiry was given partially in the first chapter. It was there said that the importance of this question of authority is new in the English Church; that it is new because the points raised by it were assumed, until recent years, to have been settled by the settlement of the Reformation; and that Anglican thinkers have not as yet had time to realise the consequences of the modern intellectual movement which is putting that settlement, as a final settlement, aside. This explanation, however, requires to be itself explained; and the explanation of it is as follows.

The reason is that the present situation is new, and Anglican thinkers have not yet had time to realise it.

They imagine that they can start afresh from the point at which the Reformers started, armed, however, with fuller knowledge.

The first result of the perception, now so general in the English Church, that the divines of the sixteenth century, to whom we owe our Anglican formularies, have by no means said the last word as to Christian doctrine, has been not more than this—to divert the mind from the conclusions of the divines in question, and send it back to the premises from which those divines themselves

derived them. In other words, the modern movement in the Church has been generally conceived of by all parties alike, as the making a new start, with increased clearness of judgment, from a point practically the same as the starting-point of the first Reformers. It is true that this conception has been not very clear or accurate. It has been what Mr. Herbert Spencer would call "*a conception out of focus.*" But like many such conceptions, it has had an extraordinary effect, and it still, to a great extent, dominates the Anglican imagination, even the extremest of the Broad Churchmen being not free from its influence.

Now of the logical position of the first Reformers the salient characteristic was as follows. In asserting their own doctrines, and in denying certain doctrines of Rome, although they rejected the Roman claim to infallibility, they were not consciously introducing a new rule of faith. The rule of faith they regarded as being beyond all question. The only question with them was, what doctrines conformed to it. As Dr. Wace points out in the essay which he contributes to *Church and Faith*, the authors of the Augsburg Confession "*practically assume that the rule to which they appeal is the same as that of their adversaries*"—that, in other words, it is the Scriptures; and they do not even think it necessary to deny the authority of

Now the Reformers did not consciously seek for a new rule of faith.

tradition. This subsequently was denied in the Anglican articles, which assert that besides the Scriptures no other rule exists; but even this denial, in Dr. Wace's opinion, would not have been formally made if the Council of Trent had not meanwhile declared that the authority of tradition and the authority of the Scriptures were co-ordinate.[1] On this point we need not insist; but one thing at least is evident—that whatever may have been the attitude towards tradition which the Reformers assumed consciously, they practically accepted without question a very large proportion of it. It constituted a mental atmosphere from which they could but partially escape; and the Bible, which they believed themselves to regard as their sole authority, was seen by them invested with the colour which this atmosphere of tradition shed on it, and surrounded with forms and presences with which the atmosphere of tradition was peopled. The devil, for example, whom Luther fought and brawled with, was a genuine child of mediæval Catholicism. Thus tradition, even if the Reformers divided themselves from Rome by rejecting it, bound them to Rome, to each other, and to the whole Christian world, by the unquestioned and the unfathomable sanctity with which it invested

They regarded the traditional authority of the Bible as axiomatic.

[1] See *Church and Faith*, p. 25. Essay on *The First Principles of Protestantism.*

the Bible. However difficult it might be to interpret the Bible's meaning, all true doctrine was in it, lurking amongst the sacred syllables. Every isolated text was, for the devout reader, a bush in which at any moment the spirit of truth might burn. This universal authority of the Bible, pervading all its parts, was accepted as self-evident; neither Romanist nor Reformer questioned it; and though the Reformers allowed themselves, by rejecting Roman authority, to draw from the Bible certain doctrines which Rome condemned, they retained of the traditional interpretation of it much more than they repudiated. In rejecting Roman authority they had indeed taken a step the ultimate effects of which were greater than they could possibly foresee; but its immediate effects on doctrine were less than is popularly supposed, and it did nothing at all to weaken the œcumenical sense that some distinct system of dogmatic Christianity could be derived from the Bible and supported by it, a considerable part of which would be beyond question by anybody.

The whole philosophy of the Reformation rested on this basis.

Now this belief in the Bible as an unquestioned and self-evident authority, though it has gradually become honeycombed with an indefinite number of qualifications, has preserved its vitality up to the present day. It no longer dominates the intellect of our Anglican thinkers, but it does dominate their

Now this belief in the Bible, though intellectually discredited amongst Anglicans,

still continues to dominate their imagination;

theological imagination. It still forms the medium in which their intellect works, and produces in their minds a conviction, which is none the less powerful because it is wanting in all logical distinctness; that if they go back to the point from which the Reformers started, they will have at their disposal precisely the same data, but will be able to deal with them in the light of a larger knowledge. Here is the explanation of their failure to grasp the importance of the question of authority as the fundamental point at issue, and to see that in it lies the key to all their divisions and differences. For the question of authority with the Reformers, though important, was emphatically not of the first importance. It entered only by accident into their original differences with Rome. It played no part at all in the differences which arose subsequently amongst themselves. By whatever methods or standards the meaning of the Bible might be interpreted, much of its meaning seemed so plain to them, and its substantial inerrancy so axiomatic, that whether its doubtful meanings were to be settled by the Church, by the Primitive Church, or by the individual, was a question the importance of which, even if not small, was secondary. Such was the position of the Reformers; and the Anglican thinkers of to-day, in defiance of their own knowledge, in defiance of

and the authority of the Bible still seeming axiomatic to them, they fail to realise the fundamental importance of the question of how the Bible is to be interpreted.

their own constant acknowledgments, are persuaded and deluded, by a singular anachronism of the imagination, into fancying that this position is substantially now their own. Accordingly, though they recognise, in a sense, that the question of authority to-day possesses an importance which it did not possess yesterday, they regard its new importance as consisting only in the fact that they are finding it necessary to consult the old authorities over again. They fail to perceive that its newness consists principally in the fact that not only the question of what the old authorities meant, but the question of how far they are reliable authorities at all, will have to be asked under absolutely new conditions. In the following chapters we will consider what the new conditions are.

They fail to see that the whole problem must be dealt with under new conditions.

CHAPTER IV

On the absolutely new position in which English Churchmen are placed intellectually by the admitted results of modern criticism of the Bible.

In exhibiting to Anglicans what the new conditions are, we still may have to refer them to their own admissions.

In exhibiting to English Churchmen the realities and the full significance of the intellectual position which they now actually occupy, it will be unnecessary for us to insist on a single point that would be disputed by any of themselves. All we shall have to do will be, as it were, to disperse a mist, which affects them just as a mist might affect a field of cricketers, and prevents them from seeing clearly what their own position is. We shall have to ask none of them to make any change in their attitude. We need merely exhibit them to themselves and to one another in the attitudes they have themselves assumed. The mist referred to, which is a product of the imagination acting under the influence of memory and persistent habit, is a frequent phenomenon in the history of intellectual progress; and whilst it does not even tend to extinguish the flame of new discoveries, the

distinctive effect of it is to interfere with the illuminating power of them. In the present case its specific effect has been this: whilst it has not in any way hindered the progress of critical knowledge in the English Church with regard to the data of Christianity, it has prevented Anglican theologians from having any clear perception of how the value of these data, and especially that of the Bible—the most important of all of them—is, for practical purposes, changed by it. The Bible for them still remains a country the geography and geology of which have had to be reconsidered, but whose products are still the same infallible teachings which never sprang or blossomed from any other soil but this. It is impossible to imagine a more complete delusion; and, as has just been said, it is unnecessary, in order to dispel it, to appeal to anything beyond their own elaborate statements—the opinions, the admissions, the avowals, the earnest teachings, of our Anglican theologians themselves, to whatever party they may belong.

Their present position is well described by Dr. Harnack,

These admissions, avowals, and teachings may be briefly summarised as follows, in the words of a devout scholar, who, though not an English Churchman, is merely enunciating with all the authority of an expert what our Anglican theologians of every school repeat. "*The most decisive step of all*" in modern religious history was, says Professor

Harnack, "*taken when it was agreed that the understanding and the exposition of the Old and New Testaments were neither to be regulated by any 'creed,' nor be allowed, out of regard to the sacredness of the text, to make use of other methods than those universally recognised in the spheres of philology and history. . . . How has this come about?*" he asks; "*Whose work has it been? No one has done it,*" he answers, "*and every one has done it. It is a consequence of the historical sense. . . . The conception of what knowledge means has altered.*"

whose words are echoed by Anglicans of all schools;

How completely this view of the German critic accords with that which prevails throughout the English Church to-day, might be shown by innumerable quotations from all classes of Anglican literature. The fact in question is, however, so notorious that a few illustrations of it will suffice. We may begin, then, with a passage which has been already quoted from the Bishop of Hereford.

e.g. the Bishop of Hereford,

"*The truths of the Gospel,*" says the Bishop, "*have come to be now, and must in future be read in the light of modern knowledge, and by those methods of dispassionate study which are now accepted as the only sure and safe guide to truth, whether in history or theology, or any other branch of learning.*" Here we have the voice of the modern Low Church party, and it is

absolutely identical in purport with that of the German critic. If the reader wishes for another Low Church authority, he may be referred to a volume whose pages we shall consult again—a volume by the Dean of Canterbury, called *The Bible; Its Meaning and Supremacy.* This consists, from beginning to end, of an impassioned setting forth of the principle which is indicated in the foregoing passages by Professor Harnack and the Bishop of Hereford—the principle that the Bible, its history, its authority, and its meaning are to be interpreted by the same methods as those which modern science is applying to history generally, philological, social, and cosmic: and the author not only maintains that these methods of interpretation are inevitable, but also that God has ordained them for us as a kind of auxiliary inspiration, and that they alone provide us in the present day with the means by which the Bible's authority and divine character can be vindicated. It is unnecessary to insist that, with regard to the point before us, the Broad Church party agree with the Dean of Canterbury. It would be, perhaps, more instructive to say that he agrees with them.

the Dean of Canterbury,

And now, from the Broad and Low, let us turn to the High Churchmen, and we shall find that their attitude is also precisely similar. We

need not make too much of the fact that even Lord Halifax himself, who, though a good theological captain, is hardly a theological thinker, endeavours to fortify what he regards as the foundation of his creed by an appeal to the results of the scientific criticism of Germany. We will go to High Church divines, who are theologians both by training and profession. In that celebrated volume of High Church apologetics *Lux Mundi*, there is an essay on *The Holy Spirit and Inspiration*, which is written by Canon Gore, the editor. Canon Gore, as might naturally be expected, maintains, that in despite of science, the supernatural inspiration of the Bible is as defensible now as ever; but it is impossible to urge in language stronger than his, that science has so revolutionised our conceptions of what the Bible is as to force us to defend its inspiration in a practically new way. The assumption, in fact, that the methods of science must be adopted by all theologians, forms the basis of the whole of Canon Gore's argument. We may add to his testimony that of the Bishop of Oxford, which is cited by Canon Gore himself. From one of the Bishop's Charges Canon Gore quotes the following passage. A few words only are omitted from it, as suggesting a side issue, but we shall presently have occasion to restore them to consider them by

Canon Gore,

themselves. "*The Holy Scriptures,*" the Bishop of Oxford says, "*are now going through a process of analytical criticism which has, we believe, no parallel for acuteness of investigation, carefulness of method, and completeness of apparatus, since the days in which they began to be regarded as a code of inspired literature, and certainly not since the days of our Blessed Lord's life on earth.*"

and the Bishop of Oxford.

All parties in the English Church, then, agree, in the study of the Bible, to accept those methods which modern science is applying to it, just as—to use once more the words of the Bishop of Hereford—it is applying them "*to history or any other branch of learning.*" All parties in the English Church have, as Professor Harnack would say, "*taken the decisive step.*" And now, this step having been taken by them, let us ask what are the results of it? All parties, even the most conservative, admit that they have been very great. Professor Harnack describes them "*as a revolution which still vibrates through the whole domain of theology . . . and is no less great than has been produced by the discoveries of natural science.*" Professor Harnack, as we have already observed, is not an English Churchman; but when once the principles of scientific criticism have been accepted, estimates of their results are not confined to Churches; and Canon Gore, though he could not

All admit that the new methods of studying the Bible have placed us, with regard to its interpretation, in a wholly new position.

have borrowed, has independently made use of, language almost identical with that of Professor Harnack. The changes produced by the adoption of a scientific Biblical criticism are, he says in the essay before referred to, if not greater, certainly not less than "*the changes involved in the acceptance of the heliocentric theory.*"

The Dean of Canterbury has explained this new position at great length.

Finally, for a fuller account of what these changes are, let us return to the Dean of Canterbury, and let us see how they are described by him.[1] He not only admits their magnitude, but he celebrates it with a voice of jubilation. Scientific criticism of the Bible, he says, has had the momentous effect of changing its character so completely in the eyes of all educated men, as to cut away the ground under the feet of those who have attacked its inspiration. It has done this by discrediting, by rendering for ever unthinkable, the old theory so general in the Protestant world, that the Bible was a book which could claim in all its parts equal immunity, or, indeed, any immunity, from error. So long as this theory was held, or any theory approaching it, the Bible, the Dean tells us, was vulnerable by all kinds of criticism. Its cosmogony, if treated as a serious attempt at science, could be

He shows us that modern criticism proves the Bible to be full of human errors,

[1] See *The Bible; Its Meaning and its Supremacy*, by the Dean of Canterbury. The account of the Dean's opinion given in the text is summarised from that work.

shown to be not more true than the dreams of a mad child. Much of its history could be shown to be mere legend, and most of it full of grave errors and inconsistencies; whilst, though most of its moral teaching is of the purest and highest kind, yet embedded in this, and claiming equal authority, we could point to commendations of conduct that was not only immoral, but monstrous. Our belief in the authority of the Bible would be indeed doomed if it implied a belief in Joshua's having interfered with the solar system, or in Jael's murder of Sisera having been commended by the Holy Ghost, or even in Jonah's whale, or the talking ass of Balaam. Nor is it the Old Testament only which is obvious to such attacks. The New Testament is vulnerable in similar, if not in the same ways. If the Gospels, for instance, are to be offered to us as absolutely inerrant documents, and our belief in their inspiration means that every sentence and statement in them is miraculously free from human mistakes and inaccuracies, every honest man, the Dean of Canterbury argues, would have to admit that their claim to be inspired was untenable; and should such an admission be really forced on the Christian, it is hard to say what parts of his sacred faith he might not find himself forced to reject as untenable likewise. But, says the Dean of Canterbury, from the peril of this position,

both historical and moral;

even the New Testament being full of inaccuracies, due to human failings of the writers.

science, which seemed to have brought it on us, is really setting us free. Whilst enforcing the conviction—enforcing it in a thousand ways—that the old conception of the inspiration of the Bible is false, it is replacing this conception by another, which is true and incalculably grander. This new conception at once emerges from and involves a new view of the Bible altogether. The Bible was viewed formerly as a single, homogeneous book, written, indeed, by various hands, and, as it were, in various handwritings, but dictated throughout, as to its sense, if not as to its actual syllables, by a Power whose communications were only in a very small degree affected by the local and mental limitations of his amanuenses. Consequently, the diversity of the human authorship of the Bible was reduced to practical insignificance by the unity of the divine authorship.

We can only now maintain, he agrees, that any parts of the Bible are inspired, by admitting that it is not inspired in all its parts.

This, the Dean says, is the view which scientific criticism has dispelled. Science, according to him, puts the Bible before us, not as a book, but as a body of religious literature whose various parts were produced, under widely different circumstances, by men who differed in knowledge and were in different frames of mind; and every part represents the peculiar circumstances of its composition—the education and temper of its author, the ideas and the superstitions of his time, and the sort of

opportunities he possessed of acquainting himself with the events described by him. The more clearly we recognise throughout all the Biblical books the presence of this natural, this purely human element, the more clearly we shall recognise the inspired element also. We shall see that the errors, the discrepancies, the atmosphere of grotesque legend, of which criticism shows us that these books are full, are no argument against their inspiration, because we make no claim that they are part of it. They are not the gold, they are merely the ore that holds it; and the gold looks all the brighter when we come to compare the two. Instead of forcing us to regard the Bible as a succession of spasmodic oracles, independent of time, independent of all chronology, and largely at variance with knowledge and common-sense, it exhibits these books to us as reflections of the spiritual progress of the race that of all races best knew the one God; whose progress was to prepare the way for the coming of God's Son; and with the life and the teaching of whose Son the succession of books ends.

This view relieves the apologist from many old difficulties;

Such is the nature of the change, as described by the Dean of Canterbury, which scientific criticism, and the rise of the historical sense, has produced in our conception of the Bible, its character, its authority, and its inspiration, considered apart from any special results; and so

considered, his description will be accepted as substantially true by all parties in the English Church alike. It must, moreover, be admitted that the consequences of this change, so far as we have yet seen, are all that the Dean says they are. By reconsidering the Bible, and by readjusting our claims for it, in the manner just indicated, we at once reduce to irrelevancy the larger part of the attacks which have seemed to the outside world to be most conclusive against it. Thus far, then, we may concede to the Dean of Canterbury, and to Anglican theologians generally, whose position he thus far represents, that scientific criticism, instead of discrediting the Bible, has actually won for it a signal and surprising victory. There is, however, another side to the question; and to this we must turn now. Our only mention of it hitherto has been by indirect allusion; but everything that has been said previously has been steadily leading up to it.

but raises a wholly new one;

A scientific view of the Bible does, be it said once more, place its alleged authority practically out of reach of the kind of destructive criticism that formerly seemed most damaging; or it takes, we may say, the weapons out of the enemy's hands. But whilst it takes away the weapons of those who attack the Bible, it takes away also from theologians of the Church of England all those

appliances, in the shape of premises and argument, by which they have hitherto been accustomed to defend and to explain the Bible. In silencing the guns that were threatening to blow their house to pieces, they have sapped the foundation on which hitherto their house has stood. The vital question for them, therefore, at the present moment, is, What new foundations will they be able to put in its place? This is what our Anglican theologians so very inadequately realise. Before proceeding to examine their position in detail, we will conclude this chapter with a short general sketch of it.

and it is this new difficulty that Anglicans fail to realise.

The great problems which confront them and demand an answer are two. In the first place, it being granted that the Bible, as presented to us by scientific criticism, cannot be convicted of any error by which its divine authority would be discredited, we have to ask how, in the light of this same criticism, the divine authority of the Biblical books can be maintained. The Bible, as we have seen, is now presented to us as a sacred literature—as a mass of works or writings which are of a very varied kind, which have been selected, moreover, from amongst many others similar to them. On what grounds, then, has this selection been made? How can we prove that, whatever inspiration may mean, these particular writings are inspired in a way in which the others are not? Will scientific

We have first to ask how it can be maintained that the Bible is inspired at all.

criticism afford us the proof required? Or if it will not, what organon of proof will?

We have secondly to ask how, granting the inspiration of parts of it, these inspired parts are to be picked out from the rest, and interpreted.

This is the first problem. Let us now consider the other. Assuming the first to have received some satisfactory answer—assuming the inspiration of these special books to have been vindicated—there still remains the question of the method by which their meaning is to be interpreted; and it will be found that the principles which have been invoked to save their authority from destruction, have imparted a character entirely new to the task of finding out what their authoritative meaning is. For the inspired elements of the Bible have been saved from discredit only by admitting that they are embedded in a mass of composite human error. We cannot with any accuracy, the Dean of Canterbury warns us, say that the Bible "IS *the Word of God.*" To be accurate we must use a phrase used already by theologians, and say that "*it contains* (*complectitur*) *the Word of God.*" Such being the case, then, the student of the Bible to-day has not only devoutly to consider what message God's Word brings to him, but he has also to distinguish — and it is obvious he must do this first — the parts of the Bible that are God's Word from those that are merely man's.

Let us illustrate the matter by an analogy from

common life. The Dean of Canterbury, we will suppose, desires to find five respectable persons fit for the post of verger in Canterbury Cathedral. He is unable personally to search for such moral paragons himself; but a friend of his knows of five for whose characters he can vouch absolutely, and engages to send their names and addresses to the Dean. He writes them on slips of paper and puts them into a bag; but for some reason or other into the same bag he puts also the names and addresses of twenty other men, who are drunkards, mole-catchers, dog-stealers, burglars—anything that is least eligible—and he sends them to the Dean all shaken up together. What would the Dean reply to a messenger who should bring him the bag and say, "This bag contains (complectitur) an infallible revelation of the names and addresses you require?" He would say, and most probably with a touch of excusable anger, "The contents of your infallible bag tell me nothing at all, unless together with them I have somebody who will infallibly sort them, and pick out the names and addresses which reveal to me what I want to know, from the names and addresses which would mislead me and make a fool of me." And with regard to the Bible, it is obvious that the case is precisely similar. Its inspired and infallible portions can convey to us no instruction till some

We can see the necessity of answering this question, by an analogy from common life.

authority altogether outside the Bible is able to tell us which these infallible portions are.

So long as the Bible was supposed to be inspired in every sentence, so long as no doubt was raised as to its claim to being inspired at all, this question of an outside authority which should firstly vouch for the fact that inspired elements were contained in it, which should secondly show us which the inspired elements were, and should thirdly show us what the inspired elements meant, was, let me say once more, if not of no importance, of an importance that was only secondary; and a body of Christians might still claim some corporate unity who applied to the interpretations of the Bible several different methods. But times have changed. Changes, as Canon Gore says, have been brought about in our whole theological position, not less than "*those involved in the adoption of the heliocentric theory*"; and the practical result of these changes, as forced on us in these latter days, is that the question which was once secondary is now become the primary one—the question of questions, on which all else depends.

A question that in former days was secondary has now become the primary question.

CHAPTER V

The need for some doctrinal authority, other than the Bible, illustrated.

HERE, then, we see in outline the new conditions under which our Church to-day must confront and deal with the question of what are the ultimate authorities from which it derives its teaching. In this chapter we will consider them more minutely; but let me first pause to emphasise the fact of their newness further, and make it as vivid as possible to the imagination of the general reader. He will thus better realise that the question, as now put to us, can never have been answered by any of our elder divines, because its present difficulties practically did not exist for them. Most English Churchmen are familiar with the name and the poetry of John Keble, author of *The Christian Year*. The times in which he lived are, chronologically, not very distant from our own. Many of the parents of the present generation were his friends. And yet

How very new the existing conditions are, can be seen by appealing to the conservative opinions of the divines—even the Broad Church divines—of the last generation.

any critics who ventured to apply to the Bible the disturbing processes of modern scientific criticism, Keble set sternly aside as "*men too wicked to be reasoned with.*" Still more curious is the evidence offered us by the case of Maurice. Maurice, the ally and contemporary of Charles Kingsley, was, as the poem which Tennyson addressed to him may remind us, regarded, within living memory, as one of the most heterodox and dangerous of Broad Churchmen; and yet when Colenso ventured to publish the writings in which he questioned the traditional authorship of the Pentateuch, Maurice was so horrified that, at the cost of great pain to himself, he felt himself bound to sever his friendship, formerly intimate, with one who had allowed himself so completely to lose faith. How different is the case now! The traditional authorship of the Pentateuch is accepted now by nobody. Only a few decades have passed away since then; and yet it is hardly too much to say that the views as to the character of the Bible which any candidate for Confirmation to-day would ridicule anybody for denying, an advanced Broad Churchman then cut a bishop for broaching.

In this volume the new facts of the situation are not interpreted

The newness of the existing situation having been thus parenthetically illustrated, let us proceed with our elucidation of the facts in which its newness consists. The first point of all, which

it is necessary to impress on the reader, relates to the scope and intention of the entire argument of this volume.

as being subversive of the Bible's authority,

Whatever may be the views of certain anti-Christian critics, it is not here contended, it is not even suggested, that modern criticism has done anything which shows, or even tends to show, that the Biblical books may not actually possess the quality of special inspiration, and the special authority claimed for them. All it is said to have done, with regard to this claim, is to have thrown the entire *onus probandi* on some authority external to the books themselves; and that it has so done, when we consider the matter, is obvious. This *onus probandi*, indeed, as a mere matter of theory, has rested on some such external authority always; and Christians who reject tradition as an authority co-ordinate with the Bible, have been always beset by a difficulty in proving, on logical grounds, that the Bible, their sole authority, was really an authority at all. But for ages this doctrine practically was accepted as axiomatic, the logical difficulty practically resting latent. It was able to be so accepted for three distinct reasons. Firstly, at the back of the doctrine was the whole weight of tradition, by which the Reformed Churches, though they repudiated it, were in reality completely overawed

but merely as throwing the *onus probandi* on its defenders.

secondly, as a consequence the Bible was exempt from ordinary criticism; and thirdly, the dates and authorship of the Biblical books themselves, together with the character of every statement contained in them, were regarded as corroborative evidence, beyond the reach of attack, that every statement contained in them, from the first of them to the last, was true. But now the acceptance and use of the methods of scientific criticism have brought the logical difficulty, so long latent, to the surface, and have caused it to take its place in the very forefront of the argument. For though there might be nothing absurd, on the face of it, in assuming the inspiration of the Bible, even in the absence of all logical proofs, so long as the Bible was treated as a kind of Sinai, and was fenced off from the attack of all ordinary criticism, the assumption at once becomes ineffective and even ridiculous, when this very same criticism, once held at a distance, is brought in triumph within the sacred enclosure, and when it is acclaimed as the sole means of testing the contents of that which it was, under former conditions, not suffered even to touch. And this change, momentous in any case, becomes yet more revolutionary, when it is seen that those features of the Bible, such as its traditional literary history, and the assumed com-

pleteness of its inerrancy, which were regarded as the strongest internal evidences of its authority, are amongst the first of its characteristics which the new criticism has destroyed, and which our theologians of to-day have unanimously agreed to repudiate.

That such is the case can be seen by taking parallel cases from human life; *e.g.* the effects of criticism on any ancient Chronicles,

The present position of the Bible, in fact, may be very vividly illustrated by comparing it to an exceptional series of Chronicles dealing with English history from the time of Alfred up to the time of Stephen—Chronicles which have been selected from a mass of similar documents, for which is claimed an authority wanting in all the others, and which have successively been presented to us in the two following lights. For centuries, we will say, these Chronicles were supposed to have been the work of writers who were unquestionably contemporary with many of the events narrated by them; who possessed information about the rest of a private and peculiar kind; and were absolutely accurate in all the statements made by them. Now, so long as the traditional authorship and the absolute accuracy of these Chronicles were assumed by an uncritical age, and were neither disproved nor disputed, it is easy to imagine that, with a further tradition at the back of them, their writers might continue to be credited with having possessed sources of information which other chroniclers,

whose accuracy remained open to question, did not. But let us suppose that, as critical knowledge develops, it gradually becomes evident that of these documents, attributed to the times of Alfred or Stephen, many were not composed till the time of Henry VIII.; that even those with the earliest origin were not written by their nominal authors, but were put together, not without many alterations, by compilers from early documents, at a very much later date; and that, lastly, the body of statements once thought to be so completely accurate, contains as many errors, and errors of the same kind, as those found in the Chronicles for which no special claim was made. The moment this happens the whole situation changes. This special series of Chronicles at once loses, for the student, all internal evidence which might invest it with any special authority. No statement contained in it, unless it is supported otherwise, possesses, on the face of it, any claim to credence which it would not possess if made by any ordinary author; and consequently none of its statements of a marvellous and essentially undemonstrable character, possess, on the face of them, any claim to credence at all. If the special authority of this special series of Chronicles is to be still maintained, it must be maintained by the evidence of some authority external to itself. How do these books,

having been written like other books, and being full of the sort of mistakes of which other books are full, command our credence in a way in which other books do not? For which of its statements, unsupported otherwise, is this anomalous credence claimed, since it is avowedly not claimed for all? And why is it claimed for these when it is not claimed for the others? Where shall we find an answer to these questions? Until they are answered, the special authority of the Chronicles will be something in which we have no ground for believing, and which, even if we believed in it, would be of no possible use to us.

At the risk of being tedious, let us take one more illustration, which may be specially commended to such of the English clergy as have lately been driven to complain that their stipends are insufficient for them. When first Klondyke and its goldfields were being brought into public notice, paragraphs appeared in the papers, saying that, in the adjoining regions, it was rumoured that the huge tusked mammoths of the ancient world survived; that natives had seen them occasionally blowing and snorting amongst the woods, and more than once had come on mysterious spots, white with mammoth skeletons and piles of invaluable ivory. Now let us suppose that, these rumours being not definitely discredited, an

or on a mass of miscellaneous evidence offered by a company promoter as to alleged stores of ivory to be found in some remote region.

enterprising promoter endeavours to bring out a company, which purports to be solely for the benefit of the English clergy, in which none but English clergymen are to be permitted to hold shares, and which is to be called "The Anglican Trans-Klondyke Ivory Company," its object being to obtain these antediluvian treasures, and its lowest possible dividends being put at forty-five per cent. Let us further suppose that, in order to obtain an influential directorate, the clergy are invited by circular to elect a Committee of representatives, to whom the promoter will submit, for full and fair examination, the reports and evidences on the strength of which he invites them to believe in the existence of the ivory, its quantity, and the possibility of securing it.

The Committee is formed. The evidences are put before them; and these evidences are in the form of a large number of letters, purporting to be written by persons who are familiar with the district in question, but who are to the Committee nothing but unknown and hardly legible names. The Committee look at the letters, and almost at once perceive that some of them contradict one another; and they mention this to the promoter. The promoter replies, "Precisely—many of them are quite untrustworthy. One of them says that the ivory lies in three enormous caves;

another, that it lies on two inaccessible mountains; another, that it is twenty miles south-east of Klondyke; another, that it is four hundred miles due west of it; and another, that it is not in North America at all, but in the east of Asiatic Russia. Most of these letters—a hundred of them—are full of such stuff as that; but you will find in the lot twelve, which I assure you are all right. On these twelve you may absolutely stake your faith, and ask your brother clergy to stake their savings also. I should, however, mention, that even in these twelve there is a large proportion of error; so you must take them *cum grano salis*, and not think for a moment that the truths they tell you are doubtful because they are mixed up with inaccuracies." The answer which the Committee would make the promoter is obvious. They would tell him he was a madman to put all these letters before them, unless he could pick out the twelve which he himself believed, and could specify in them the passages he put forward as true, and could give satisfactory reasons for this process of selection.

But now, finally, let us make one more supposition. The promoter, instead of being taken aback by this answer, mentions to the Committee the name of a great scientific traveller,

All the evidence would have to be sifted by some competent and independent authority; and its value would then depend on him, not on the evidence taken by itself as it stands.

held throughout the world in profound respect for his veracity, and asks the Committee if they also are believers in it. The Committee reply that they are, but that they fail to see the point of the question. The promoter tinkles a hand-bell, and immediately, through a side-door, the traveller himself enters, bows to the surprised Committee, and seats himself, at the promoter's request, in front of the pile of letters. He gathers them together, sorts them like a pack of cards, and says, as he is doing so, "Gentlemen, these letters are written by a number of persons with whose lives, characters, and handwritings I happen to be intimately acquainted. The larger number of these persons, whose letters I throw in this basket, speak of the mammoths and the ivory merely from the vaguest hearsay, helped by their own unscrupulous and exceedingly ignorant imagination. But this letter, this one, and this one—twelve out of the whole collection—were written by men who have, to my certain knowledge, visited the spots they write about, and have honestly done their best to tell the truth, and to tell nothing except the truth. Their style, however, is not very lucid, they have suffered from some slips of memory, they differ in their calculation of distances, they differ in quickness of observation. Moreover,

none of them being observers with any scientific training, the technical information they give you is in many places technically wrong. I will, however, initial their letters, to show you that they are honest and genuine, in a sense in which the others are not; I will underline the passages in them on which you may rely absolutely, and wherever their meaning is doubtful I will pencil an explanation in the margin."

It is plain that the position of the Committee would now be completely changed. They would now have something to go upon; and we may, without any absurdity, suppose them to feel that the evidence supports the representations of the promoter, and justifies them in encouraging the clergy—the poor clergy especially—to put their savings into the "Anglican Trans-Klondyke Ivory Company." But should they thus decide to take on themselves this very grave responsibility, on what would their decision be based? It would be based primarily, not on the character of the letters, but on the character of the man who vouched for the general truth of twelve of them, who explained the obscure statements in these, separated the true from the inaccurate, and showed, from his own knowledge, how and why and where the writers could be implicitly trusted, and how and why and where they could not.

Were such an external authority not forthcoming, the evidence offered by the promoter would be valueless.

We have merely to suppose the Committee subsequently to become aware that the entrance, and even the existence, of this man, were a dream, and it need not be said that they would anxiously and instantly hasten to warn every clergyman against the shares which they had just before been recommending, and caution him against jeopardising the livelihood of his wife and children, on the faith of representations which, even if they should happen to be true, it was difficult to understand clearly, and quite impossible to substantiate. The position of the Bible to-day is essentially similar to that of the letters submitted by our imaginary promoter to his Committee. Everything depends on the authority that will vouch for it and explain its meaning; and it is the character of this authority that must first be inquired into and established. Do Anglican theologians think that an inquiry of this kind is to be treated more carelessly when the salvation of souls is at stake, than it would have to be were nothing at stake greater than a few subscriptions of two or three five-pound notes?

The history of the Biblical canon shows us how such an external authority was actually called in.

Though our story of the Committee is nothing more than a parable, it is far more closely analogous than many parables are, to the facts it has been employed to illustrate; for the special

inspiration of certain of the Biblical books history shows us in the process of being discussed and doubted, and finally, at different dates, affirmed by certain authorities, not only external to the books, but very much later than the latest of them. It is not necessary here to burden the reader with details. Attention shall merely be called to the following well-known facts. The inspiration of the whole of those writings which Anglicans call the Apocrypha was under dispute so late as the fourth century. Some said that all were inspired; some said that none were; others than none were, except *Baruch* and *Judith*. Athanasius denied the inspiration of *Esther*, and affirmed the inspiration of the *Letter of Jeremiah*. We know of no formal canon of the New Testament books till a hundred and fifty years subsequent to the death of Christ; and this appears to have included an *Apocalypse* (now rejected) of St. Peter; whilst two more centuries passed before the Christian world generally consented to accept as inspired the *Epistle to the Hebrews*, the *Second Epistle of St. Peter*, the *Second* and *Third of St. John*, the *Epistle of St. James*, the *Epistle of St. Jude*, and that impregnable rock of the prophetic Protestant, the *Apocalypse of St. John*. How the Christian world became satisfied as to the inspirations of all these last, their inspiration having

been doubtful for centuries after their authors' death; why the Reformed Churches accepted the disputed books of the New Testament, whilst refusing to accept the disputed books of the Old, and many similar questions, need not be discussed here. These matters are here alluded to merely to remind the reader that the authority of the Biblical books has, from the very beginning, depended on the authority which declares the books to be authoritative; that this authority is not in the books themselves, and that it never made itself felt in any definite way till centuries after many of the books were written. The authority, whatever it was, which settled these questions formerly, was an authority which satisfied Christians in a pre-scientific age. The Anglican Church to-day has appealed to Scientific Criticism. Questions one thought settled for ever have been consequently reopened. Will the old authority settle these questions now? And if it will not, what authority will?

Will the authority once thought conclusive in this matter suffice in the present day?

The question, however, first in logic though it be, of how Anglicans to-day can maintain that the Bible is inspired at all, is, for practical purposes, almost eclipsed by the question of how, the fact of the Bible's inspiration being granted, they can identify the inspired parts of it, and draw from them any definite meaning. The

The necessity for some such an authority to interpret the Bible is even more obvious than the necessity for some authority that shall vouch for its inspiration.

necessity for some authority other than the Bible itself, though not greater in this case than in the former, is more obvious, more familiarly urgent; and indeed so far as the argument of the present volume is concerned, we need hardly go beyond it. If the Bible is to be the source for us of any definite information with regard to the nature of God, the redemption of man by Christ, and the means by which this redemption is applied to the individual Christian, what certain information, in the absence of any other guide, will the Christian world get from it, let them believe in its inspiration as they will?

CHAPTER VI

Concerning the three theories of the authority for Christian doctrine, advanced by the three doctrinal parties in the English Church. Are these theories even consistent with themselves?

Though Anglican thinkers recognise the necessity for some authority external to the Bible, they fail to realise that it is a matter of the first necessity. They do not treat the question with the extreme care it demands.

THEORETICALLY, as has been said before, the necessity for this extraneous guide, this extraneous authority, is admitted and even urged by all Anglican parties already. The object of the preceding chapter has been to show them, what they fail to realise, that it is, in consequence of our new intellectual conditions, not only a matter of necessity, but a matter of the first necessity; and that until they can tell us definitely, coherently, and fully, on what foundations their belief in and their interpretation of the Bible rests, all the emphasis they expend in asserting their rival doctrines is as meaningless as the crowing of cocks in a farm-yard. They answer this question, as it is, often and glibly enough, each party answering it in a different way. But they neither consider it nor answer it with anything like sufficient care. They scamp their sacred work. They examine the foundations of their faith with a kind of flippant

negligence, for which, as a board of directors, they would prosecute any firm of accountants, who should happen to exhibit it when dealing with the books of a company.

Let us consider again the four answers they give us.

The answers they give us we have already briefly glanced at. Let us now return to them and see what they really come to. Classified broadly, we saw that they were four in number, and that they offered us, respectively, as the fundamental authority we were asking for, *first*, the unanimous consent of the Church during all periods of its existence; *secondly*, the doctrines and practices of the Church during the earlier periods of its existence; *thirdly*, the individual studying the Bible as the only inspired book; *fourthly*, the individual studying the Bible as the best of inspired books. The last of these answers, which is that of the Broad Church party, must hereafter be dealt with separately; partly because that party uses the word inspiration in a sense different from the sense in which it is used by all the others; and partly because, whatever its methods may be, it professes to draw from them a different order of conclusions. Accordingly, though some of the criticisms on which we are now about to enter will apply to the answer of the Broad Churchmen as well as to those of the others, it is the first three answers that we shall specially deal with now.

Though they differ in all other respects, they all agree in one thing—that the definite answer given by the Church of Rome is absolutely wrong.

But of all of these, the fourth included, there is one thing to be said; and this is something on which we must specially insist on starting. There is a certain answer to the question now before us, which all these four answers absolutely agree in repudiating; and this is the answer to the question given by the Church of Rome. The Church of Rome, when asked on what grounds we are to believe in the Bible, and by what means, believing in it, we are to discriminate its true meaning, answers us that these grounds and means are the Roman Church itself, which is an ever-living and ever-infallible teacher, the same Church to-day as it was on the day of Pentecost; and which, though it speaks officially at distant intervals only, so speaks, when it does speak, in a manner which all can recognise, thus progressively defining the faith, as successive definitions become necessary. This claim to a living infallibility, with a definite organ of utterance, which is made by the Church of Rome, is denied by all Anglicans equally. The denial of it, indeed, is almost the only point, except the existence of God, with regard to which all Anglicans remain really unanimous; and here their unanimity is more than real—it is passionate. It is a point of brotherly and intimate spiritual agreement between Lord Halifax and the gentleman whom he calls a blaspheming brawler, Mr. Kensit.

But it is not Anglicans only whom this denial

thus knits together. It knits together all those many Christian bodies which owe their distinct existence, directly or indirectly, to the Reformation. Nor, in spite of all their differences, is this point of agreement accidental. At the time of the Reformation it seemed so; but it is a characteristic of all great principles that their results are ultimately beyond all calculation wider than those generations which first adopt them know. This is true of scientific principles when applied to the industrial arts. It is true of the printing-press. It is true of the steam-engine and of electricity. It is pre-eminently true of the repudiation, by reformed Christendom, of the living infallibility claimed for itself by the Church of Rome. To reformed Christendom at the time of the Reformation it not only seemed that this particular claim was untenable. It seemed also that any such claim was superfluous. But slowly, and yet inevitably, the centuries have wrought their changes. That old foundation, the Bible, on which all reformed Christendom boldly rested itself at the beginning, as though it were a solid rock, has ceased in itself to be a foundation any longer. It moves, it shifts, it totters. It will support no structure, unless something outside itself shall be found which will support *it*. That something the Roman Church supplied; and now reformed Christendom is beginning at last to find

All the other Churches which originated in the Reformation agree as to this also.

But though they reject the authority of the Church of Rome, they are now all of them driven to seek some substitute for it.

that for that something, which it rejected and still rejects, it is necessary to find a substitute. This is the common primary intellectual need of Anglican, of Presbyterian, of Lutheran, of Episcopalian, of Nonconformist, of Protestant, of High Churchman, of Evangelical—it is the need of all equally. Such being the case, then, I propose henceforward to make use of a name, as occasion happens to call for it, which I have thus far carefully avoided. This is the name Protestant. I have avoided it thus far, because, as used commonly, it has come to be repudiated by many to whom it is still applied—by such bodies, for instance, as our own Ritualistic party. Here, however, I propose to use it in a strictly limited sense, with which no party can quarrel. I propose to use it as denoting all Christian bodies which unite in protesting against one particular thing, even though they unite in protesting against nothing else; and this particular thing is the claim of the Roman Church to be a living and infallible authority which, however the position of the Bible may be altered by scientific knowledge, still attests its inspiration, and guides us to its true meaning. The name Protestant as thus defined is at once clear and inoffensive, and the reader will see, as we proceed, the convenience of thus employing it.

And all the four answers referred to are attempts to

Resuming, then, our consideration of the three Anglican answers to the question before us, which

at present are our special concern, we shall find that they are all of them typical Protestant attempts to devise a substitute for the rejected answer of Rome. Thus far, however, we have glanced at them much too briefly to enable us to form any clear idea of their value. We must now, therefore, inquire more narrowly into the precise meaning attached to each by the school of thinkers offering it; and consider whether any one of them, when stated plainly and submitted to a steady scrutiny, can be seriously accepted by any serious man; whether it meets any one of the difficulties which it purports to meet, or even tends to do so; and whether it is even so much as approximately consistent with itself.

supply us with such a substitute. Let us consider the three more closely, postponing our consideration of the fourth.

We will begin our examination of them with the assistance of the Dean of Canterbury, who, in his work *The Bible*, and elsewhere, dwells emphatically on them all, and, inconsistent as they are, appears, with an ingenious catholicity, to accept them all. Let us start with the account which he gives us of the answer of the Low Church party—the answer that the Bible's inspiration is vouched for by the personal intuition of the individual, and its meaning interpreted by some process which takes place in the individual mind.

The Dean tells us, like all other Low Churchmen, that this intuition and interpretation are

Firstly, there is the intuitional theory;

superintended by the Holy Ghost, "*the Guide—the Remembrancer—who dwells in each Christian's heart.*" He expresses it, however, in slightly different words. He says that there exists in every Christian's heart what he calls "*the verifying faculty of the Christian consciousness*"; and that this faculty firstly proves to us that parts of the Bible are inspired; secondly, picks out the inspired parts from the others; and lastly, shows us with certainty what the inspired parts mean. "*In everything,*" he adds, "*which is requisite for man's salvation, the lessons contained in Scripture, with the co-ordinate help of the Spirit by which its writers were moved, to aid us in our discrimination, are an infallible guide to us.*"[1]

secondly, the theory of the authority of the primitive Church;

Let us now see how he describes what we have called the High Church answer, which refers us not to the Christian consciousness of the individual, but to the opinions and practices of the primitive Christian Church. If, he says in the essay which he contributes to *Church and Faith*, we would find, amongst many errors, true Christian doctrine, let us discover "*the views held in the days of primitive Christianity. In these ages Christians were not removed by nineteen centuries, with their many aberrations and corruptions—but only by a brief interspace of time—from the immediate*

[1] *The Bible*, p. 141.

teaching of our Lord and his apostles. It is they [*i.e.* the Christians of the primitive age] *who have handed down to us the inestimable heritage of the Christian faith.*"[1]

thirdly, the theory of the authority of the *consensus* in all ages.

Finally, let us see how he describes what we have called the answer of the Ritualists, which, instead of confining us to the teaching of the primitive Church, assigns an equal authority to that of subsequent ages; and this answer, too, the Dean contrives to put forward as his own. At the very beginning of his work *The Bible*, the Dean lays it down that Christian *opinions* are altogether distinct from the essential and indubitable articles of the Christian faith; and there is an infallible test, he says, by which the latter may be separated from the former. "*Opinions*," he says, "*may be held by all the members of any one branch of the Christian Church; but if they are rejected by any other acknowledged branches of the Church they are not an essential part of the Christian faith.*" They may even, he continues, be held not only by one branch of the Church, "*but by the majority of Christians, and nearly all their accredited teachers, in any particular age, or even for successive ages*";[2] and yet, according to the Dean, if subsequently any considerable body of Christians denies them, they are proved *ipso facto*

[1] *Church and Faith*, p. 57.

[2] *The Bible*, p. 10.

to have been opinions only, and no portion of the real Christian verity. In other words, our infallible authority and guide is, as the Dean puts it, according to this theory, "*a general consensus of Christians*," not in any one age only, such as that of the primitive Church, nor in one Communion only, such as that of Rome, but in all ages, and in all Christian Communions. Were it not for the authority of this living consensus, Christianity, the Dean says, would become "*of necessity corrupt*,"[1] because any kind of Christianity "*will be corrupt if it is not progressive*"; and as "*new truths*" are being constantly manifested to the Church, "*which are nothing less than a continuous revelation*," the authority of this living and moving consensus is necessary, as a means by which these new truths may be identified, accepted, and endorsed.

Having observed, by the way, that all these answers contradict each other,

Now we will only pause for a moment to dwell on the astounding fact that the Dean himself adopts all these answers at once; but it is a fact of great significance, and comment will not be wasted on it. It forms an example of what I have called the flippant negligence with which the foundations and the rule of faith are treated in the English Church. For if the first answer which the Dean gives us is true, and the verifying consciousness of the individual Christian, as he studies the Bible, is

[1] *The Bible*, p. 7.

our sole and sufficient guide, then the second answer, which refers him to the teaching of the primitive Christians, is superfluous; or if it is not superfluous, it shows the first answer to be false: whilst if the third answer is true, which represents a progressive consensus of all Christian bodies as revealing to us the only Christianity which is not "*of necessity corrupt*," then, in that case, the second answer is false, which confines authority to a consensus of Christians in the remote past. It is, however, no part of our business to attack the Dean of Canterbury for his personal inconsistency as such. He has been quoted here, because he sets forth clearly and eloquently, not any principles which happen to be peculiar to himself, but the three principles or theories which three great Anglican parties offer us as the foundations and proofs of the religion which they hold and teach. Forgetting then the Dean's personal feat of adopting these three principles or theories simultaneously, we will go on to consider the value of each separately. We will first briefly consider how far each is consistent with itself, and we will then consider how far it is calculated to meet those difficulties which have arisen out of the knowledge of the present day.

let us consider each on its merits, first asking if it is consistent with itself; then if it is, practically it will do for us what we want.

Let us begin with the alleged sufficiency of the Christian consciousness of the individual. Its

consistency with itself can be tested with great ease. If the individual, animated by a devout intention, as he broods over the pages of the Bible, is infallibly guided by the "*Holy Ghost, the Remembrancer*," to a true perception of what the Bible means, the meanings deduced from it by all devout Christians who study it in the same way, will substantially, at all events, be the same. Now is this the case? So long as he confines himself to generalities, the Dean of Canterbury boldly declares that it is. "*As to every truth which is essential to salvation*," he says, "*the perspicuity of Scripture is absolute*";[1] and he adds that, as a matter of fact, the differences between the individuals who study Scripture thus, relate not "*to essentials*," but merely "*to the minutiæ of theology.*" But the moment the Dean leaves his generalities behind him, and gives his attention to the well-known facts of history—as he does directly after the passage just referred to—what do we find him telling us? It is something grotesquely different. Each individual Christian, he says, who tries to get his religion from the Bible, sees in it his own opinions—"*Sua dogmata quisque.*" "*The Romanist*," he says, "*finds in it the primacy of Peter. . . . The Protestant discovers in it that Rome is the 'Mother of Harlots.' . . . The Sacer-*

The intuitional theory is condemned by the conflicting character of its results.

[1] *The Bible*, p. 142.

dotalist sees in it priestly supremacy, Eucharistic sacrifice, and sacramental salvation. The Protestant cannot find in it the faintest trace of Sacerdotalism, nor any connection whatever between offering an actual sacrifice and the holy memorial supper of the Lord. . . . The Calvinist sees in it the dreadful image of wrath flaming over all the pages, and says to his enemies, 'Our God is a consuming fire.' The Universalist sees only the loving heavenly Father, and explains the most awful forebodings as Oriental tropes and pictorial rhetoric."[1] What acknowledgment can be more conclusive than this, of the hopeless inconsistency with itself of the theory of individual illumination? Will the Dean of Canterbury maintain that it is merely one of "*the minutiæ of theology*" which divides the doctrine that God is "*a consuming fire*" from the doctrine that God is a "*loving heavenly Father*," whose threats of vengeance on sinners are "*merely Oriental tropes*"? It is obvious that the Dean cannot seriously think this himself, either of these two doctrines, or of any of the others which he contrasts; and in another passage he frankly admits that he does not. "*What some Christians*," he says, "*even in the same Church, regard as dogmas and practices of consummate sacredness, others, quite as able and quite as*

[1] *The Bible*, pp. 143, 144.

sincere, despise as specimens of crude materialism and unworthy fetish-worship."[1] And a little farther on, he says, with yet greater plainness, "*Even as to the most obvious and elementary conceptions of how we may obtain salvation, there are, though there ought not to be, the most striking differences.*"[2] How then can the "*Christian consciousness*" of the individual be any infallible guide with regard even to the essentials of Christianity? The Dean's assertions that it can be—unsupported by any evidence—are not indeed "*merely Oriental tropes*," but they very certainly are merely Occidental "*rhetoric*"; whilst his overwhelming proofs that it cannot be, are neither more nor less than notorious matters of history.

The authority of the primitive Church fails at the very point at which it is most needed.

Let us next ask whether the theory which offers us, as our authority, not the individual, but the consensus of the primitive Church, is superior in self-consistency to the theory of individual illumination. In some respects it possibly might be, if those who profess to build on it were really content with asserting such doctrines as might be legitimately derived from it. But even were such the case—and we shall presently ask whether it is so—the consistency of the theory with itself would be partial only, and we should find that it was still vitiated by a fundamental self-contradiction. For,

[1] *The Bible*, p. 142. [2] *Ibid.* p. 147.

as we have seen already, the authority of the primitive Church is invoked, before all things, as a witness to the authority of the Bible, and as an inspired selector of the really inspired parts of it. But the Church in primitive times was precisely in the condition in which it was least qualified, as to this, to give us any information at all; for a very large part, at all events, of the Canon as now received, was then wholly unsettled; and the importance of coming to a decision as to what books were inspired, and what books were not, did not become urgent until the precise period at which, according to the Dean, the primitive Church ended. The primitive Church was the Church, as the Dean takes care to remind us, which was separated "*only by a brief interspace of time*" from a living memory of Christ and his first apostles; and if anything is certain, this is certain at all events, that Christ never asserted the inspiration of any part of the New Testament, for the simple reason that none of it was written during his life on earth; nor was the inspiration of any part of it asserted by any one of his immediate followers.

The theory of the consensus of all the Churches fails, because there is no consensus amongst any of the Churches that can ratify it.

And now let us turn to the theory of the consensus of all the Churches as a living guide and authority which continues to instruct us still; and of this, too, let us ask how far it is consistent with itself.

It starts with asserting that the English Church is a body forming an integral part of an undivided whole, of which the Church of Rome is another part, and that they share the guidance of some mystical consensus between them. Now it is plain, from its own terms, that if this theory is to have any weight at all, it must itself be ratified by a consensus of the mass of those who are referred to in it. But is such the case? On the contrary, by an overwhelming majority of them it is absolutely denied and repudiated. It is absolutely denied and repudiated by the whole of the Church of Rome, which is twice as numerous as all the Protestant Communions in the world: and this is not all, for, what is still more striking, it is similarly denied and repudiated by the majority of Protestants themselves. It is worthy of remark that this argument against it is urged by Romanists and Protestants in almost identical terms. In the *Dublin Review* for April 1899, there was an article dealing with a speech made by Lord Halifax—a speech in which this theory of the consensus was set forth as a kind of manifesto. "*If*," says the writer, "*a vastly preponderating mass or majority is to be accepted as indicative of the voice and verdict of the whole, as by its nature it must be . . . . the very basis and theory of the position* [of Lord Halifax] *stands condemned by Catholic*

consent."[1] A Bampton lecturer—a contributor to *Church and Faith*, in his essay in that volume, puts the matter as follows. "*To use a little parable*," he says, "*a Roman and an Anglican priest, and a Presbyterian minister, are shipwrecked together on a desolate island. The Anglican congratulates the Roman that the Catholics are in a majority of two to one. 'Not at all,' replies the Roman, 'I am the only Catholic; you Protestants are in a majority. I have nothing to do with you, get you gone.' . . . To maintain an idea of Catholicity which, by the majority of those it would embrace, is absolutely and unconditionally repudiated, seems*," the writer proceeds in conclusion, "*difficult.*"[2] To this little parable let us add another of our own. A homœopathic doctor finds himself at a medical conference, consisting, besides himself, of fifty allopaths, twenty ardent Christian scientists, and twenty African medicine-men: and he begins an address on the principles of medical knowledge and practice. "The first principle," he says, "is that no principle is true which is not agreed to by everybody in this room." "No, sir!" say the others. "We, none of us agree to that. Your very first principle falls to the ground at once; for it cannot

[1] *Dublin Review*, vol. 124, pp. 259, 260.
[2] *Church and Faith*, p. 144.

even fulfil its own conditions of credibility." The theory of the general consensus is in absolutely the same position.

Let us now test these theories by their relation to the question they are meant to solve.

It has then been shown, with sufficient clearness, that the three theories which the Anglican Church offers us of the basis and test of the doctrines of doctrinal Christianity, have not even the merit of an internal consistency with themselves; but involve, when stated clearly, the same kind of absurdity to which Euclid reduces certain false hypotheses in geometry. What lies before us now is the yet more important inquiry, of how far these theories, whether logically self-consistent or not, are calculated to meet, touch, or throw any kind of light on any one of the questions of which severally they are offered as a complete solution.

CHAPTER VII

Concerning the practical application of the theories discussed in the preceding chapter. The nature and position of the doctrines which they are invoked to substantiate, illustrated by three examples.

When a theory can be shown to be logically inconsistent with itself, the fact will be admitted, by every reasonable man, to afford a strong presumption that the theory in question is false. But this kind of *reductio ad absurdum* is less conclusive, because it is less precise, when applied to religion than it is when applied to the propositions of Euclid: and although a religious theory may be, with the utmost clearness, shown to be self-confuting as a matter of formal logic, a sediment of belief may remain in the minds of those attached to it, that though it breaks down in its logic, there is some truth in it after all. The only way in which the correctness of this sediment of belief can be gauged, is by turning from the question of how the theory is constructed, to the question of how it works when applied to the

problems it is concerned with. The final test, therefore, of the three Anglican theories—or we may call them the three Protestant theories, for they are not confined to Anglicans—is not their formal self-consistency, but their practical, their working power, to provide doctrinal Christianity with any kind of foundation which can be accepted by those who have avowedly agreed to submit the objective evidences of their faith to the touch-stone of modern criticism.

It must be remembered that the Christianity we are now dealing with is *doctrinal* Christianity.

The reader will observe that in speaking of Christianity I have been careful, at this point, to qualify it with the word "*doctrinal.*" I have done so to distinguish the Christianity we are now considering, namely, the Christianity of the Ritualistic, the High Church and Low Church parties, from Christianity as the Broad Church party conceives of it, which more or less plainly professes to be non-dogmatic; and which, accordingly, we shall have to consider by itself. Our present business is with a Christianity of which doctrines are an essential part. In other words, it is a religion which stands or falls with its power of substantiating certain definite statements as to fact; and the task now before us is, in consequence, this. We must consider what these definite statements are which doctrinal Anglicans enumerate as certain and essential truths; and ask if the certainty which they claim for

them is capable of being reached or vindicated by any of the proofs or authorities on which they profess to rest it. Our inquiry is thus one the limits of which are defined sharply. We have not to take certain religious premises, and reason from them, as best we can, towards some conclusions of our own. The conclusions are given us by others. They are given in the most absolute way. We have to take these conclusions, and reason back to the premises. We have to take them like points in a lawyer's brief, and see how far they are supported by the evidence which the lawyer offers us.

We start with the doctrines, and ask how we are to substantiate them.

It may, however, seem perhaps that our inquiry is likely to be a confusing one: for Christian doctrine—or we may call it the doctrinal brief—as held respectively by the three Anglican parties, is not one series of conclusions or propositions, but three; and in each there are many which contradict many in the two others. But this fact need not embarrass us here: for underlying these divergent propositions are some on which, as a minimum of doctrine, all three parties insist alike, which they all express in precisely the same terms, and which represent, moreover, the general character of the whole. These are the propositions which make up the Creeds. We will therefore take the Creeds, or rather one of the Creeds, namely, the Apostles'; and, all its articles being regarded as equally vital,

We will take as types of doctrine four propositions from the Apostles' Creed, which assert the Virgin birth, the Crucifixion, the descent into Hell, and the Resurrection.

we will select certain of them, and examine them as test cases. In this selection we will follow an exceedingly able writer, who recently joined issue on the very point that is now before us, with an Anglican upholder of doctrinal Christianity, Lord Halifax. The writer I refer to is Mrs. Humphry Ward, well known to the majority of English readers as an earnest exponent of the view that doctrinal Christianity is untenable. She, in an Essay specially addressed to Lord Halifax, has taken from the Apostles' Creed certain typical propositions, and has asked him on what grounds it is possible that we should now believe them. We will take the same propositions, and presently we will reproduce her arguments; for as the former are types of all Christian doctrine, so will the latter supply us with convenient types of the kind of objections raised by historical and analytical criticism.[1] The propositions in question are these: the first is that which asserts that Christ was born of a virgin; the second is that which asserts that, having been crucified, he descended into Hell; the third is that

[1] The passages quoted in this chapter from Mrs. Ward are taken from an article by her, called "The New Reformation," addressed to Lord Halifax, which was published in *The Nineteenth Century* for October 1899. I have chosen Mrs. Ward as an exponent of the kind of difficulties raised by a critical study of Christian evidences, because, though she makes no claim to being an original student, she has perhaps done more than any other English writer to popularise a knowledge of what these difficulties are; and her general representation of them is intelligent, vivid, and correct, even if some of her views in detail may be open to dispute.

which asserts that, having risen, he ascended into Heaven. And to these we will add a fourth—the proposition which asserts that he was crucified under Pontius Pilate.

Now about the last of these propositions we are able to speak with confidence; and it will give us a standard by which to judge of the others. That Christ was actually crucified, and crucified at the time stated, is a fact which nobody questions. The character of the event being considered, the evidence in its favour is conclusive. We believe in it just as we believe that Cæsar invaded Britain. With regard, then, to the other three articles, what we have to ask is this: On what grounds can educated men to-day be induced to give similar credence to the assertion that Christ was born without any human father—to the assertion that he visited some mysterious place called Hell—and to the assertion that in bodily form he ascended from the earth's surface? To doctrinal Christianity the actuality of all these events is as essential, and is admitted to be as essential, as is that of the Crucifixion itself. By what means, in the existing state of knowledge, can their objective, their historical truth, be established with equal certainty?

Acting in accordance with a habit produced by centuries, doctrinal Anglicans, and doctrinal

And having examined the effects of criticism on the New Testament, we will ask if the old evidences any longer suffice to prove them;

Protestants generally, will instinctively tell us, as their first answer to our question, that the truth of these events is proved by statements in the New Testament. But second thoughts will show them that, on their own explicit admission, the evidential value of these statements has now to be entirely reconsidered. It has to be reconsidered, as the Bishop of Hereford says, "*in the light of modern knowledge, and by those methods of dispassionate study, which are now accepted as the only sure and safe guides to truth, in theology or any other branch of learning.*" It has to be reconsidered, as Professor Harnack says, in the light of the new "*historical sense.*" It has to be reconsidered, as the Bishop of Oxford, and Canon Gore following him, say, in the light of that "*analytical criticism, which has no parallel for acuteness of investigation, carefulness of method, and completeness of apparatus, since the days of our blessed Lord's life on earth.*" Also we must remember that, as Canon Gore and Professor Harnack remind us, the employment of this new criticism has not been without new results, but has produced a change in our conception of the Bible's evidential value, and especially in the value of many of its detailed statements, which is comparable in magnitude to the change in our conception of the Universe produced by our ac-

ceptance of the heliocentric theory. The assertion, then, that the Virgin birth of Christ, his descent into Hell, and his final ascent into Heaven, can be, by means of the evidence of the New Testament, established as certainly as the undoubted fact of his Crucifixion, is an assertion the truth of which can be no longer taken for granted. We must, with dispassionate care, inquire whether it is a true assertion or not; and if we should find that it is not true—if we should find that the New Testament evidence, historically and critically examined, does not of itself suffice to prove the three facts in question, and if, nevertheless, they are still to be proclaimed as certain, we shall then be able to see whether by any of these other authorities which Anglican theology offers us this certainty can be maintained.

and if, in case they do not, any of the Anglican authorities will.

Let us begin then by asking, with more precision than we have done yet, what are the chief effects which historical and analytical criticism have produced on our conception of the New Testament and the ideas and events recorded in it. In a previous chapter a passage was quoted—it was just now again referred to—from a charge by the Bishop of Oxford, in which he acknowledges the momentous character of the change produced by modern criticism in our interpretation of "*the Holy Scriptures.*" It was mentioned at the time, how-

That the evidential value of the New Testament has been affected by criticism, all Anglican parties admit. But in what way?

ever, that some words were omitted from the passage. It was not of the Holy Scriptures as a whole that the Bishop thus spoke. He limited his observation to the "*Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament.*" His doing this, if this limitation had any serious purpose, is a singular example of that want of power to see the true result of admitted methods and principles which characterises, as has been said, the Anglican intelligence of to-day, and suggests that the Anglican thinkers are moving in a kind of mist. For the Bishop of Oxford cannot doubt, as a scholar, that the effects of modern Biblical criticism, instead of being confined to the Old Testament, are, when it is applied to the New, even greater and more startling in their significance. The latter, it is true, are different in kind from the former. They do not imply or depend on any very sweeping change in our views as to the dates and authorship of the New Testament books. They tend rather to confirm our belief in them as genuine historical documents, and do nothing to alter—so Professor Harnack assures us—"*the main lineaments of the personality of Christ and the true point of his sayings.*" In what way, then, do scientific criticism, and what Professor Harnack calls "*the rise of the historical sense,*" alter our conception of the New Testament at all? They do so in two ways. They do so by

presenting to us in an entirely new perspective—firstly, facts and ideas of which the text is an admittedly true record; and secondly, admitted facts connected with the text itself. Let us consider each of these two ways separately.

Firstly, by putting the events and ideas recorded in it in a new perspective;

The first is briefly described by Professor Harnack thus. The traditional method of treating the New Testament was a method which regarded the ideas and events recorded in it as being "*beyond time*"—as being independent of their secular circumstances. The new method is essentially the exact reverse of this. "*It may not,*" says Professor Harnack, "*and it will not overlook the concrete features in which, and by which, the life and doctrine of Christ were fashioned in their day. It seeks for points of connection with the Old Testament and its developments, with the religious life of the synagogue, with contemporary hopes for the future, and the intellectual and spiritual condition of the world of Greece and Rome; and it finds that the evidence of such a connection is unmistakable. The consequence is that the sayings and discourses of the Lord, and the image of His life itself, not only take their colour—and it is a very definite colour—from the history of the time; but are also seen to possess very definite limitations.*"

The significance of these words is illustrated by

the following observations of Mrs. Ward. "*We now*," she says, "*know* [from a mass of documentary evidence] *that Christianity, as a system of ideas, was more than half in existence before the Lord lived and taught—that its distinctive doctrines of the Kingdom, the Son of Man, heaven and hell, angels and devils, were the familiar furniture of the minds amongst which it arose. The interest of the problem*," she proceeds, "*has really very much shifted from the two hundred years after the Crucifixion to the two hundred years before it. The doctrine of a pre-existent Messiah, the elements for the doctrine of a suffering Messiah, the 'heavenly man' of St. Paul . . . to say nothing of 'the theosophy trembling on the verge of becoming a religion,' as it has been called, which the thought of Philo produced on Hellenistic ground—all these were already in existence long before the Galilean ministry or the First Epistle to the Thessalonians.*" The ultimate conclusion to be drawn from facts like these, we need not at this moment consider. It is enough now to observe that this connection of Christian doctrine with the thought of the world in general, by showing what M. Sabbatier calls "*its historic contingency*," exhibits it, as has just been said, in an entirely new perspective.

And now, from the ideas of the New Testament,

let us turn our attention to the text, and we shall see how criticism has produced a similar effect on that. It has, no doubt, discovered new facts connected with it; but the discovery of new facts has not been its most important work. Its most important work has been to place in a new light a class of facts that were long admitted and recognised. All commentators knew that there were in the Gospel narratives many apparent discrepancies, and some passages of doubtful authenticity; and Catholics and Protestants alike have devoted much ingenuity to the task of explaining away the various difficulties suggested by them, so that each Gospel, from its first verse to its last, might be able to make good its claim to complete inerrancy. The task, however, is now admitted to have been a hopeless one; and in the face of modern criticism, it has been altogether abandoned. The idea of interpolations is no longer rejected as inadmissible; and many, at all events, of the apparent discrepancies as to fact, are admitted to be the precise things they appear to be—namely, real discrepancies due to human imperfections in the writers—failures of memory, or defective personal knowledge. Indeed, they are just such features as we might naturally expect to find in the depositions of honest but uncritical witnesses.

secondly, by putting in a new perspective admitted facts with regard to the text.

But whilst, on the one hand, the adoption

of this critical attitude strengthens rather than weakens the evidential value of the Gospels so far as regards a considerable portion of their subject-matter, there is another portion with regard to which the effects of it are wholly different; and these latter effects have been produced in a peculiar manner, which can best be described by means of a homely analogy. When a play is being acted on the stage of a great theatre, the actors and actresses are made up with such skill, that they appear to the spectator, as he sees them behind the footlights, to have figures and faces entirely different from their own. Though he knows this appearance is the result of very ordinary artifice, the illusion to his eye is perfect. But if once the footlights are put out, if daylight takes the place of them, and the spectator, mounting the stage, examines the performers closely, all the illusion ends. He sees at a glance where the false forehead joins the real one; brilliant complexions turn to powder and daubs of paint; and instead of being deceived any longer, he wonders how he was deceived at all. A similar change has been produced in the aspect of the New Testament text by the general adoption of the modern critical method. There has been, as it were, a turning down of the theological footlights, which intervened between the text and the student, throwing on it an

artificial glow; and we now see it close at hand, bare to the light of day. Examining it thus, we find some new facts in connection with it; but the principal result has been to make us conscious of the true significance of old facts—facts which we knew before, but never clearly understood. These facts as we see them now, at once inevitably suggest to us explanations of themselves, which, under former conditions, the most daring theologians hardly ventured to contemplate. Of how they do this we will now take certain examples. They shall be examples which bring us back to the point from which we lately started.

Seen in this new perspective, the evidence for the Virgin birth loses its independent force. So does the evidence for

We will begin with the story of the miraculous birth of Christ—Christ for whom there was claimed a direct descent from David. It is a notorious fact that both the Gospel genealogies which purport to set forth his Davidic descent in detail, trace it not through his mother, but through Joseph, who is, in the accounts of his birth, emphatically asserted to have been no relation to him whatsoever. Of this classical difficulty many explanations have been offered; but now, as Mrs. Humphry Ward has pointed out to Lord Halifax, the difficulty and the explanation both become suddenly very simple. The Gospel genealogies trace Christ's descent through Joseph, because they were written before the belief had spread itself that his birth was a

physiological portent, and that Joseph was not his father. This natural inference is corroborated by the fact that the miraculous birth does not figure in the narrative on which it is generally admitted that the Gospels alike of Matthew and Luke were based. In the Gospel of Mark it is altogether ignored; and in the Gospel of John there is at most a vague and uncertain reference to it. There is nothing new in these facts. The only thing that is new is the fact that at last we are learning to draw from them the natural inference—the natural inference that the miraculous birth of Christ did not form part of the primitive Christian teaching. There is a further fact still which can be verified by the most ordinary reader, and which, as Mrs. Ward very justly argues, lends to the same inference an even greater strength. This is the curious inconsistency between the miraculous birth and the rest of Christ's life, as all the Gospels give it to us. Nothing of that stupendous event, of the songs of the heavenly host, nothing of the star, nothing of the adoring Magi, when once these marvels have been mentioned, is ever heard again. Even the mother of Christ and his kinsmen have apparently no knowledge of them. "*In the New Testament, indeed,*" says Mrs. Humphry Ward, who urges on Lord Halifax all the above points, "*two distinct views of the parentage and birth of Jesus Christ,*

one attributing his birth to natural causes, the other to supernatural, are plainly expressed; and the natural view is clearly the earlier. Moreover, the indirect expression of this view, which pervades the greater part of the New Testament, is historically far more convincing than the direct expression given to its rival in the birth-chapters of Luke and Matthew."

The descent into Hell,

And now let us pass on from the miraculous birth to the Ascension. The evidence on which the Ascension was traditionally supposed to rest, is seen, when examined by the methods of modern criticism, to suffer a change precisely the same in kind as that which is suffered by the evidences of the miraculous birth. The Ascension is seen to have been originally regarded by the Christians as a part of the Resurrection, and as having occurred in Jerusalem on the same day. The scene of it then was transferred from Jerusalem to Galilee. Then, by and by, it was again located in Jerusalem; but the date of the occurrence was asserted to have been forty days later. As an event distinct from the Resurrection, historical and textual criticism show that it had no place in the earlier teaching; and, says Professor Harnack, such passages in the first three Gospels as suggest a contrary conclusion, "*are by the history of the text proved to have been later additions.*"

and the Resurrection.

We have one more event to deal with, and that is the descent into Hell. What sort of evidence for that is contained in the New Testament? The only passage which even suggests it is in the First Epistle of Peter, where it is said that "*Christ, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the Spirit . . . preached to the spirits in prison.*" On the other hand, Christ himself, in the act of expiring on the Cross, distinctly said that he would that day be in Paradise. Thus the New Testament evidence, so far as it goes, is contradictory; whilst still more significant is the fact that not before the second century are there any signs that a belief in this alleged event was later on to develop into a portion of the Christian faith.

Here, then, we have before us the New Testament evidence for the three events we are considering, as it appears to us when examined and sifted by that analytical criticism, which "*for accuracy of method and completeness of apparatus*" the Bishop of Oxford declares to be unrivalled. The foregoing account of its results is taken from a profound German scholar, and an accomplished English student, who are warped in their views by no anti-religious prejudices; and however, in some of its details, this criticism may be open to correction, there can be no doubt that, for all practical

purposes, its results are such as Professor Harnack and Mrs. Ward describe them. The New Testament evidences, then, for the three events being what we have just seen them to be, the first question we have to ask is this: Are these evidences, if we approach them, as the Bishop of Hereford says we must, "*without presuppositions*," without any desire to find in them a "*buttress*" for "*inherited traditions*" to which we happen to be attached—if we approach them, for example, as we should approach the earlier books of Livy — are these evidences of a kind to place the Virgin birth of Christ, his descent into Hell, and his Ascension, on the footing of historical certainty admittedly occupied by his Crucifixion?

These events are not disproved by criticism, but are merely shown to require evidence in their favour other than that of the New Testament.

Now Professor Harnack, Mrs. Ward, and the whole school represented by them, which includes an enormous and growing number of devout persons, say that these evidences not only fail altogether to provide these events with any historical basis, but show them conclusively to be neither more nor less than legends. Our own position, however — the position underlying the whole of the previous argument — is the precise reverse of this. We still assume these events to have been, in the strictest sense, historical. We are only asking on what grounds our assumption can be reasonably justified. The utmost that we

admit criticism to have done to the New Testament evidences, is to show us that they are insufficient by themselves to prove that these events are historical: but, at the same time, we, in common with the most timid scholars, concede to the school of Professor Harnack and Mrs. Ward, that the very least that criticism has done is to show us that the New Testament evidences fail to impart to these events a character of historical certainty. But these events are, for doctrinal Christians, fundamentally and essentially certain, or else they are less than nothing. In the opinion of such Christians, the Virgin birth of Christ is, as Lord Halifax says, the foundation of their whole religion; and if the Gospels, examined as ordinary documents, can suggest such an event as possible, but cannot render it certain, the difference between certainty—burning, absolute certainty, and possibility, or even probability, must be produced in the Christian by evidence of some other kind. Will this other kind of evidence, as explained to us by any of the three Anglican or Protestant theories of it, produce, with regard to the events now before us, the absolute certainty which the doctrinal Christian claims for them? Will this certainty be produced by the intuition of the devout individual reader? Will it be produced by an appeal to the beliefs of the primitive Church? Or will it be

Will any of the Anglican theories supply us with this evidence?

produced by some vague consensus of Christians vaguely defined, and deprived of all definite means of making itself heard, and of recording itself?

CHAPTER VIII

The Low Church, the High Church, and the Ritualistic theories, each tested, by being applied to the doctrines that have just been mentioned. The Ritualistic theory of the consensus the least satisfactory of all.

The intuitional theory will certainly not do so.

LET us begin with the intuition of the individual—the individual illuminated by the interior workings of the Spirit. If this theory be true, every baptized Christian is endowed with a faculty which, unless it be quenched by sin, is an infallible guide to true Christian doctrine, and is the ultimate proof that it is true. It does not guide him to Christian truth directly, but it enables him to pick it out of the Bible. It enables him to distinguish the historical statements in it from the legendary, those literally true from those true metaphorically; and of those statements that are ambiguous it indicates the true meaning. Now, so far as regards the moral teaching of the Bible, the theory no doubt rests on an actual basis of fact. The moral teaching of the Bible appeals to a set of feelings in us, which, when once roused, make an independent response to

It can give some support to moral, but none to doctrinal Christianity;

it; and these living feelings do form a certain standard by which to interpret the teaching that originally roused them. But our present concern is not with moral teaching at all. It is with definite assertions as to alleged historical events. Can it be maintained that there is any interior guide that will enable the individual to pronounce infallibly as to *them?*

It is, of course, assumed—and the Bishop of Hereford insists—that the interior guide prompts us to make use of secular criticism, and so far as it goes to trust it. But if the guide is to help us here, it has to do more than this. Besides endorsing what this criticism tells us, it must supplement it. Out of a number of assertions purporting on the face of them to be historical, but alike deprived by criticism of their supposed evidential value, the guide, whilst rejecting some, has to vouch independently for the absolute truth of others. Does, in reality, any such guide exist, seated self-sufficient in the soul of each baptized individual—a guide which, whilst bidding him not to insist literally on the story of the sun going back on the dial of Ahaz, and whilst bidding him to treat Christ's statement "*This is my body*" as a metaphor, shall infallibly inform him that the story of the Virgin birth is historical, and that the latest account of the Resurrection is more accurate than the earlier

ones? To ask this question is in reality to answer it. The "*interior witness*," by those who rely on its guidance, is always described as a "*spiritual experience*" of the individual; and though such an experience is conceivable as a guide in spiritual questions, it is impossible to conceive of it as a guide in critical and historical judgments.

That such is the case has been not only admitted, but insisted on, by the French Evangelical Protestant, M. Adolphe Sabbatier, who shows that the theory of this "*witness*" as a guide to dogmatic doctrine belonged to an age, and could only maintain itself in an age, when historical and critical discrimination were supposed to be quite unnecessary. We will, however, put it to a positive and definite test. If the "*interior witness*" is really competent to assure us that, in spite of all critical doubts, the Virgin birth, the descent into Hell, and the Ascension are absolutely certain and assured historical events, it cannot be infallible with regard to these events only. If it has spoken at all, it has spoken about many others; and it must be equally infallible in what it has said about these also. Now, up to the middle of the present century there was one series of events about which those who believed in this witness claimed that it spoke most emphatically, declaring them to be, in an historical sense, true. These were the events

recorded in the Mosaic account of the Creation; together with the further event, namely, the writing of that account by Moses. The party, however, by which the interior witness was supposed till yesterday to have imparted this information, have now, in the face of geological and critical science, been eager to admit that this information was erroneous. How then can they maintain that their witness is an infallible guide with regard to the Virgin birth, the descent into Hell, and the Ascension, when they admit it to have been completely mistaken with regard to the creation of the world, and the origin of the documents in which the account of the Creation is contained?

But this is not all. It remains to recall the reader's attention to another series of facts, mentioned in a previous chapter. It was there pointed out, in the words of the Dean of Canterbury, that the interior witness, when speaking not of historical events, but of questions appealing directly to the moral and spiritual sense, such as the means by which salvation is to be gained by the individual soul, guides different individuals to hopelessly conflicting answers, and that it cannot even affix any one undisputed meaning to many of the most important of the utterances of Christ himself. It tells one man that Christ instituted the propitiatory sacrifice of the mass; another that the idea of any

such sacrifice would have been abhorrent to him. It tells one man that Christ founded a priesthood of a specific kind; it tells another that he founded a priesthood of some kind; it tells a third that he abolished the institution of priesthood altogether. If it cannot speak infallibly about questions such as these—questions appealing directly to the moral and spiritual sense, and arising directly out of the undisputed words of Christ—how can it speak infallibly about remote historical events, the objective evidence for which is utterly inconclusive, and which, if they appeal to the spiritual sense at all, appeal to it only through a long process of reasoning?

as any Low Church divine would find if pressed by a doubting member of his congregation.

Let any Low Church Anglican clergyman, who professes to ground his faith solely on the Bible, as vouched for by the interior witness in the individual, and who is at the same time fully conversant with the results of modern Biblical criticism, be asked to-day by any doubting members of his congregation, how he can re-persuade others that the Virgin birth was a fact—that Christ's birth was the result of a unique physiological process, defying all the analogies and known laws of nature: and what could such a clergyman say? All he could say, put plainly, would be nothing more than this —"I know this marvel was a fact, simply because I feel that it was a fact." How could such an

answer help those who consulted him? They would answer in their turn, "But this is precisely what we have ceased to feel. Why are your feelings a surer guide than ours? You might as well tell us that you feel that King Alfred burnt the cakes, that the Trojans landed at Totness, that Remus jumped over the mud wall of Romulus; and ask us, because of your feelings, to take these legends as certainties." The clergyman, thus pressed, would probably be driven to reply, "But in this feeling of mine about the Nativity I do not stand alone. Consider the mass of Christians who feel exactly as I do." This is an argument the value of which will be considered in another place. It is enough here to point out that if our clergyman used it, he would *ipso facto* be abandoning his own position. He would be throwing over the theory of the interior witness altogether, and adopting the theory of a witness in its very essence exterior. He would be adopting the theory of the consensus, which offers us, as the test of any doctrine's truth, not the fact of the individual feeling its truth intensely, but the fact of a number of individuals believing in its truth unanimously.

The authority of the primitive Church is not more helpful, for it is weak in precise proportion to its primitiveness.

Let us next take the theory that the guide to doctrine, and the evidence of it, are the beliefs prevalent in the primitive Christian Church—amongst Christ's immediate disciples, and the immediate

successors of his disciples—successors who, as the Dean of Canterbury says, were separated "*only by a brief interspace of time*" from the days when Christ's teaching was still a living memory. This brings us at once to the consensus theory, in a certain form; but it is the theory of the consensus truncated as it were, and limited by considerations of common historical evidence. This limitation, it must be observed, implicitly changes the character of that theory altogether; for by attributing to a primitive consensus an authority that it denies to any consensus subsequent to it, it rests this authority not on the perpetual guidance of the Holy Spirit, but on the accuracy and retentiveness of ordinary human memory, and on the action of ordinary intelligence on the facts with which this memory supplied it. Can, then, the primitive Church, regarded in this light, be held to supply us with any positive proof that the Virgin birth, the descent into Hell, and the Ascension were historical facts? The more closely this question is examined by the methods of scientific research, the more clear does it become that the evidence of the primitive Church, isolated from the evidence of the Church during later ages, not only fails to prove that these events were true, but affords us the strongest grounds for considering them to be purely legendary. For if, as the theory assumes, the

primitive Church is an authority because its members, in point of time, were near the events referred to, its authority will be strongest during the years that were most near to them, and will gradually grow weaker in proportion as the events grew distant. But, as has been pointed out, the evidence for the events in question is most deficient during the years that were nearest their alleged occurrence, and becomes definite in almost exact proportion as the interspace which divided the Church from their alleged occurrence lengthened. As we have seen already, during the life of Christ himself, all records of a belief in his Virgin birth are wanting. They are wanting in the earliest memoirs composed of his life by his disciples. The accepted account of his Resurrection is not the earliest account of it, but the latest. The assertion of his descent into Hell belongs to a time still later. How then can these events be substantiated by the witness of primitive Christianity, when the witness for them grows fainter and fainter in proportion as it becomes more primitive?

Moreover, it asserted doctrines which *all* Christians today reject; therefore it is no authority for what they still accept.

There is, however, more to add. Not only does the witness of the really primitive Church fail to substantiate these events which doctrinal Christianity postulates; but it gives its authority to beliefs which doctrinal Christianity rejects. The really primitive Church insisted on the necessity of

circumcision. It believed also in the immediate second coming of Christ. Why, if its witness was erroneous with regard to both these questions, is it, when taken by itself, to be accepted as an infallible guide with regard to others of a precisely similar kind? Why, if, when its memory of Christ was freshest, it was so hopelessly wrong with regard to his second coming, was it necessarily right, when its memory became less fresh, with regard to the circumstances—equally mysterious—of his first coming. To put the matter briefly, of all the alleged foundations for the doctrines postulated by the doctrinal Christianity of to-day, none has been shattered more completely by historical criticism than the primitive Church considered as an isolated authority. In the first place it shows us that even of that minimum of doctrines now considered essential by all doctrinal Christians, many in the primitive Church were wanting altogether; in the second place it shows that the rest were incompletely developed; and lastly it shows us, with regard to the historical doctrines in particular, that the evidence of the primitive Church does more to undermine than to confirm them.

Let us lastly consider the theory, as put forward by Protestants, Anglican or other, which finds its authority in the consensus of the Church as a whole —a Church whose living voice is still our guide

to truth, instead of having ceased abruptly after stammering for a few generations. Will this supply us with evidence of a more satisfactory kind? In spite of the logical inconsistency of this theory with itself, which was mentioned in a former chapter, we may, when we test it practically, be inclined to think that it will; and we may be inclined to think so, in spite of another objection which the first practical question we shall have to ask will suggest to us. Let us deal with this first.

The theory of the consensus seems more promising,

It is obvious that if we appeal to the consensus as an authority for any definite statements, our first care must be to inquire by what means the consensus speaks, and where its confirmation of these definite statements is to be found. Now the Roman Church, as presently we shall again have occasion to remark, answers that they are to be found in the decisions of her own councils—councils which represent the living Church as a whole, and are rendered infallible by the assistance of the Holy Spirit. But this answer the Anglican Church rejects. The Roman Church, it protests, is not the Church as a whole. None of the Churches are; they are only component parts of it; and no one of these parts by itself is protected against error. All have erred; and Anglicans of all parties protest that of all the Churches it is Rome that has erred most

in spite of the fact that no Protestant theory provides it with any organ of utterance,

seriously. If, then, the true, the infallible consensus of Christians does not speak through the formal decisions of Rome, where, and by what means, does it speak?

The Dean of Canterbury, though he has never faced this question steadily, shows, in his work *The Bible*, that at moments he perceives the importance of it; and in one of these lucid intervals he offers us a distinct answer to it. As an example of how this living consensus speaks—this consensus which is the source of all our certainty, which saves Christianity from corruption by making a "*continuous revelation*" of it, and is to guide us now through the difficulties of these modern days—he offers us certain definite and carefully-preserved documents; and these documents are the Creeds. He offers us this example, but he does not offer us any other; and for not doing so he informs us that he has an excellent reason. The reason is that there is no other example in existence. "*Outside the Creeds*," he says, "*there is no agreement in Christendom as to where the infallible rule is.*"[1] Now surely this is a somewhat insignificant mouse to issue from the parturient mountain of continuous and progressive revelation; and seeing that the mountain cannot, if the Dean be correct, have produced anything since the days of Athanasius at

or any example of its utterance except the Creeds themselves.

[1] *The Bible*, p. 141.

latest, we may safely say that, on the Dean's own showing, his continuous revelation cannot be so very continuous after all.

Still the Creeds do vouch for the very doctrines in question.

Still, if we confine our attention to the three great doctrines—those of the Virgin birth, the descent into Hell, and the Ascension—we must admit that these, at all events, form part of the Creeds, and do thus constitute a definite and documentary record of a general consensus amongst Christians at the time when the Creeds were formulated. We may admit further that, as an authority for the doctrines in question, this consensus is logically far superior to the authority of the primitive Church—the primitive Church distinguished from the Church of the times that followed it, and considered authoritative because its memories of Christ were fresh. For, as we have seen already, the time when these memories were freshest is precisely the time when the evidence for these doctrines was weakest; but the consensus which expressed itself in the Creeds, instead of being the result of memory, was the result of progressive meditation on facts which memory had committed to memoranda: and if we really and seriously accept this consensus as our guide, we admit that the events which are postulated as the foundation of doctrinal Christianity were more clearly understood by the generations who subsequently reflected on them, and who asked

not only what the memoranda recorded, but what they indirectly implied, than they were by those observers from whose memory the memoranda were originally derived.

But is it credible that the consensus can be a real authority if it can be only shown to have spoken twice, or at most three times?

Such being the case, then, how far does the theory of the consensus, as the Dean of Canterbury formulates it, provide an intelligent person who accepts it at the present day, with grounds for believing that the propositions of the Creeds are true? So far as it goes, this theory, once accepted, affords us, if we isolate it from all other considerations, an authority for such a belief, which is seemingly sufficient and consistent. The difficulty with regard to it arises from the important fact that to isolate it from other considerations is altogether impossible. There are other considerations of an absolutely essential kind in connection with which we are necessarily compelled to take it. So far as it goes, indeed, it does not substantially differ from the Roman doctrine of a Church which, in its corporate capacity, is infallible; but the difference between the two is this, that whilst the Roman theory is developed to its full logical conclusion, the Anglican theory, as the Dean of Canterbury expounds it, is limited by a further theory which changes its whole character. The Roman theory asserts that this same consensus of Christians, which gave its authority to the various propositions

of the Creeds, has continued to speak, whenever its speech was necessary, with equal precision up to the present day, and will continue to do so, with ever-increasing fulness, up to the day when the life of the Church on earth ends. The Dean of Canterbury's theory, on the contrary, maintains that this mystical authority has spoken only twice, or three times at the utmost; the third time, if he includes it—which he most probably does not—being the time of the composition of the so-called Creed of St. Athanasius; and that ever since then the oracle has remained dumb. The Dean maintains, further, in accordance with the Anglican Articles, that not only all the Churches, but even General Councils, have erred in matters of faith, and that none of them are unfailing guides. Hence there arise the two following questions. Firstly, if this consensus has been so exceedingly spasmodic in its utterances, and has never uttered anything since the beginning of the fourth century, what grounds have we, in logic or plausibility, for attributing to it any infallible authority at all? And secondly, how, if the decisions of even General Councils are fallible, can infallibility attach to the decisions represented by the formulæ of the Creeds?

How again can Protestants who declare all Councils to be fallible, separate the Creeds from the decisions of Councils, and claim infallibility for them?

This latter question alone, to which no answer is possible, is sufficient itself to show the unreality of the Dean's position; but we shall find, if we refer

to certain emphatic admissions of his own, that he shows its unreality himself in a yet more direct manner. For we shall find, if we study his account of the theory of the consensus closely, that he declares the Creeds to be its sole authoritative utterances, not because they represent a consensus of Christians at the time when they were first formulated, but because he assumes that there exists a consensus in their favour still. Many doctrines, he says—as we saw in a former chapter—have had in their favour a consensus not of "*one branch of the Church only*," but of the great "*majority of Christians*," including amongst them "*nearly all their accredited teachers*," and not for one age only, "*but for successive ages*"; and yet the fact of this consensus does nothing to attest their truth. And why? Because, says the Dean, a consensus ceases to be binding, and is proved to have no authority, the moment any considerable body of Christians dissents from it. This subsequent dissent from the doctrines it once ratified proves them to have been opinions only, not parts of the assured Christian teaching—opinions probably "*erroneous*," and in many cases "*hateful.*"[1] Such being the case, then, the authority of the consensus for the Creeds—for the Virgin birth, for the descent into Hell, for the Ascension—*ipso facto* ceases to be an authority at all, the moment

The Dean of Canterbury unconsciously shows us how absurd this theory is.

[1] See *The Bible*, p. 10.

the truth of the Creeds begins to be seriously questioned. In other words, the authority of the consensus is destroyed by the very conditions which make an appeal to it necessary.

We have not, however, finished our examination of this theory yet. It is, as has been said already, a theory which, in the English Church, is distinctively the theory not of the Low Churchmen, but of the Ritualists. We must, therefore, not content ourselves with considering a Low Churchman's exposition of it. We must consider it also as expounded by the Ritualists themselves; and we shall see that in one respect the account of it given by them differs materially from the account given by the Dean. The Dean, as we have seen, in accordance with the Anglican Articles, denies infallibility to Councils—even to those that were really Œcumenical. The Ritualists, on the contrary, maintain that a council which is really Œcumenical does possess that infallibility which the Articles and the Dean deny to it. They contend, however, that since the schism between the Eastern and Western Churches, the getting together of an Œcumenical Council has been impossible; and that consequently the consensus, though it spoke through Councils once, speaks through them no longer; and has, as an historical fact, never spoken through them for nearly twelve hundred years. Now, is the theory

It is true that the Ritualists avoid one difficulty which besets other Protestants, for they do admit that General Councils are infallible:

of the consensus, with this definite addition to it, more convincing and reasonable than it is when this addition is wanting? In one respect and in a certain sense it is so. It excludes, that is to say, one self-stultifying doctrine by which alone the position of the Dean of Canterbury would be vitiated. It admits that the consensus, when it has once formally spoken, as it spoke through the Councils preceding the great Schism, has spoken with an authority which is binding on the Church for ever; that no questioning of its decisions by Christians in subsequent ages, can reduce the doctrines it has sanctioned to erroneous or even doubtful opinions; and maintains that those who doubt or question them, instead of invalidating their authority, put themselves out of court, by convicting themselves of heresy. But though the Ritualistic theory of the consensus is free from one of the defects so fatal and conspicuous in the theory of it, as formulated by the Dean of Canterbury, there is one defect which the two possess in common; and this is the most fatal and fundamental defect of all.

but they maintain that General Councils became impossible after the schism between the East and West.

According to both theories, the consensus, however it may have spoken once—whether it spoke through Creeds or Councils—has no recognised organ of utterance now. The Dean of Canterbury would tell us that it has had none for nearly

sixteen hundred years. The Ritualists would tell us that it has had none for nearly twelve hundred. For one or other of those periods it has been a face without a mouth; and it makes no more difference to the argument which computation we adopt, than it makes to a drowning man, if a rope fails to reach him, whether the rope is too short by sixteen yards or by twelve. For if we start with asserting the consensus to be our one sole authority, it is impossible to claim for it this authority in the past, unless we can also maintain that it is equally authoritative in the present, in order that it may, in the first instance, be a witness to its own inerrancy. If the Anglican doctrine of the consensus cannot establish *itself*, by what possible means is it capable of establishing any others? We do not ask that it should establish itself by ordinary historical evidences. We invoke it, in order that it may corroborate and supplement them, not because we imagine it rests on them: and if we accept it at all, we must accept it by an act of faith. But in order to accept an authority by an act of faith, what we do require is that there shall be some authority to accept. We require that it shall have some identifiable organ of utterance; and if we are to believe what it tells us, we must be able to distinguish what it tells us. But the Christian consensus, as Anglican theorists

Therefore they admit, just as other Protestants do, that there cannot possibly be any infallible councils now. How then does the consensus speak?

represent it, has no living organ of utterance, no definite voice at all. It cannot even encourage us by agreeing with itself that it is true.

A recent Low Church writer shows how futile is the only answer he can give to this question;

One of the writers in *Church and Faith*, who, following the Dean of Canterbury, endeavours to press the consensus into the service of Low Church theology, admits that such is the case in the very act of arguing that it is not. How, he asks, does the voice of the consensus speak to us? And here is his answer. "*It is*," he says, "*like the wind, of which thou hearest the sound, but canst not tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth. It has to be gathered painfully and with difficulty, from the indications of the thought and of the experience of successive generations of men.*"[1] It is plain that to admit this is to abandon the theory of the consensus altogether. The consensus is invoked to affirm and interpret the meaning of the Bible; and the individual is invoked to discover the meaning of the consensus; just as the Indian theory which says that the world rests on an elephant, adds that in its turn the elephant rests on a tortoise. The final authority, therefore, is the individual, not the consensus at all; and since the individual can come to his conclusions only with pain and difficulty, from a long course of profound study and meditation, to the mass of

[1] *Church and Faith*, p. 159.

ordinary men the consensus will mean nothing whatever; and to each of the few students it is certain to mean something different. What clearer admission than this could the writer possibly make, that the authority of the consensus can, on his own principles—that is to say, the principles of a Low Church Anglican—be nothing more than a useless and deluding figment?

And now let us return to the Ritualists, and ask if, from their position, they can make out for the consensus any case that is a jot more reasonable? Can they indicate any more clearly than the writer in *Church and Faith*, where and how it has spoken during the last twelve hundred years? Can they indicate how or where it speaks at the present moment, and tells them that it really possesses the authority they insist on attributing to it? There is one body of Christians —and it is older and incomparably more numerous than any of those other Christian bodies distinguished from it, which does give to these questions a distinct and coherent answer; and it is the only distinct and coherent answer which has ever been given or attempted. It tells us how the consensus speaks, what the consensus says; and cites the consensus to-day as a witness to its own authority. But this answer—the answer of the Church of Rome—the Anglican Ritualists

dismiss as an arrogant and impudent imposture. We must ask, then, can they give any other? And if they can, will it be at all more coherent and definite than the answer, absolutely futile, of the writer in *Church and Faith?* And will it be more in accordance, than the answer of the Church of Rome, with those principles on which the answer of the Church of Rome is rejected by them?

and the Ritualists, despite an apparent advantage in their position, cannot give a better one.

So far as clearness and coherency are concerned, the answer given by the Ritualists is in no way superior to that of the writer just referred to, nor is it indeed different. They, no more than the lowest of Low Churchmen, can tell us how or where the living consensus of Christians endorses their own theory of it; and if tested by the principles applied by them to the theory of Rome, their own theory becomes more untenable still. For the Ritualists reject the immemorial answer of Rome, on the ground that it makes the consensus not sufficiently comprehensive, confining it, as it does, to members of the Roman Church itself. This, say the Ritualists, is an entirely artificial limitation. The basis of the consensus must be wider. It must, indeed, rigidly exclude all Protestant Communions which are not strictly sacerdotal in their constitutions; but it must include all Communions which are. The Ritualists, however, even according to the most sanguine computation, cannot possibly

comprise more than ten million persons; whilst the Roman Church comprises more than two hundred millions. How then, if a consensus of more than two hundred million Christians has not sufficient authority to establish a theory of itself, which is absolutely clear and logical, and has all tradition at the back of it, can a consensus of ten millions be sufficient to establish another, which all Christians of all other kinds repudiate, which tradition fails to support, and logic to state intelligibly? By no possible gerrymandering of the spiritual constituencies of Christendom can the Ritualists' theory put itself on any plausible basis; and even if ingenuity could devise a plausible basis to support it, we should find that there was nothing definite, nothing intelligible, for it to support.

We began our consideration of the Anglican theories of authority with special reference to certain typical articles of the Creeds—articles which assert the occurrence of certain specific events at certain definite dates—indeed, on certain definite days. We asked whether, in the absence of all sufficient ordinary evidence for their occurrence, any one of these theories, if we adopted it and made the best of it, would supply us with evidence of its own, which would render their occurrence certain to us; and we have found that none of

them is equal to the task we would impose on it. We have found that the individual consciousness will do nothing to help us. We have found that the primitive Church is equally inefficient; and we have now found that the Anglican theory of the consensus is perhaps the most elaborately inefficient of all. It either resolves itself into the judgment of the individual, who with great pain and difficulty endeavours to attach some meaning to a voice vague as the wind; or it refers us to the same voice without anybody to interpret it at all. This voice, moreover, as the Ritualistic party describes it, is a voice which that party alone professes to hear; and which the vast majority of Christians declare to be a mere dream.

But we will test the theory yet further, by asking

And yet the Anglican mind—the mind even of our Low Churchmen—recurs to this theory with such a strange and self-deluding persistence, that we will put it to one test more. Passing from the question of how far it is capable of assuring us of the veracity of the historical statements of the Creeds—statements which have been formulated in a manner so definite that to the question of their truth we have only to say Ay or No—let us turn to certain problems with which Christianity is now confronted, but to which Christian thought of the past offered no solution, because for Christian thought of the past these problems had no existence.

how the consensus can deal with the wholly new problems put before Christianity by modern science;

When Christianity first began to develop into a theological system, it had to reconcile its doctrines with the intellectual knowledge of the time, as St. John did when he described Christ as the Logos. If doctrinal Christianity is to continue a living authority, and is not to be abandoned altogether, as many Christian bodies are abandoning it, it must reconcile its teaching with the knowledge of the modern world, not less fully and not less precisely than it reconciled its teaching at the beginning with the knowledge and philosophy of the ancient. It will have, for example, to reconcile the doctrine of the fall of man with our new knowledge of man's physiological origin; and this, and other reconciliations of a similar kind, if effected at all, can be effected only by the means of some new doctrines, gradually evolved, and then finally formulated, like the doctrine of the Logos and the Athanasian doctrine of the Trinity. Can any consensus such as Anglican Protestants dream about, offer us, I do not say any such doctrines now, but any grounds for believing that it can ever possibly do so? Or can it lend meanwhile any definite and firm support to that fabric of doctrines which Protestants profess already, so that whilst waiting for a fuller revelation we may possess our souls in peace? It can do nothing of the kind. The Ritualists and the Low Churchmen are equally

and we still see yet more clearly how futile this theory is.

incapable of referring us even to a consensus within their own Communion; whilst, of the great Episcopalian Communions which exist outside their own, one, the Greek Church, holds that the evolution of dogma is at an end; the other, the Roman, holds it to be impossible outside itself; and would say to the Ritualists, "The utmost you can ever do, so long as you persist in rejecting Rome as the one authority, is to agree with our decisions by some fortunate accident; but you can neither share in our certainty, nor can you contribute to it." And so we are brought back again, whichever way we turn, to the old logical difficulty which we indicated in a former chapter. The Protestant theory of the consensus, however plausible it may seem to us for occasional moments, when we take but a partial view of it, or when our reason is off its guard, is not only condemned by the failure which attends all attempts to apply it, but is absolutely contradicted by the principle which it postulates as its own foundation.

If in these days of anxious and inevitable thought, when the discoveries of science and criticism are forcing themselves on the minds of all, our clergy can offer those of their flock who are assailed by unwilling doubt, no surer ground than this for a continuance in the Christian faith, we may surely say of these unfortunate sufferers,

"*The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed.*" Does this reflection never occur to our Anglican clergy themselves? They cannot put aside the difficulties which criticism has raised, as idle. They have welcomed criticism themselves; they have heralded its achievements from their pulpits; they have acclaimed it as a Perseus which has delivered them from many of their old difficulties. How can they hide their faces from the difficulties to which it has given rise? Can they doubt that these difficulties are pressing all around them on the souls of those whose faith it is their special duty to defend? And can they doubt that, instead of defending this faith, they are murdering it, if they meet these difficulties with solutions which will not bear the test of the most rigorous investigation which the human mind can apply to them—with solutions which may, for the moment, pass muster in the pulpit, like a toy boat glued together which looks sea-worthy in a shop window, but fall to pieces the moment they are taken home and examined, as the toy boat falls to pieces when a child puts it into a basin?

Do not our doctrinal clergy realise the intolerable position which intellectually they occupy?

I am not referring now—let the reader recollect this—to the Broad Church clergy, who repudiate any definite doctrinal system. With these we will deal hereafter. I am referring to those only who, whether Low Churchmen, High Churchmen,

or Ritualists, regard certain doctrines as essential to the holy religion which they profess. Such doctrines are definite, historical, or philosophical propositions, and they require a philosophic foundation no less definite than themselves. This foundation none of the three theories of authority possible within the limits of the Anglican or any Protestant Church, is any longer competent to supply. They can supply no foundation which will sustain even the faith of those who have believed the doctrines once, and are praying to remain believers in them. What foundation for such doctrines will these theories offer to the modern Gentile world, which is anxious, indeed, to reach the truth, but has no prepossession in favour of doctrinal Christianity as the expression of it?

And yet is the intellectual defence of doctrine hopeless? No.

And yet is the case for doctrinal Christianity hopeless? It is not so. It is the object of this volume to show, with precision, that it is not so; and, as we shall see presently, these Anglican theories themselves, useless as they are in the form which Anglicans give them, will help us to show that it is not so, by the very fact of their uselessness.

CHAPTER IX

Concerning the theory of authority which is rejected by all Protestants; but which, when adopted, completes their own theories, reconciles their contradictions, and makes of them a logical whole.

Let us consider now more precisely what it is we want to prove.

We are now about to enter on a new stage of our inquiry; and it is specially necessary at this point that we should realise with absolute precision what the limits of our inquiry are. Accordingly, although this has been explained before, it will, for clearness' sake, be advisable to explain it once again. Let me remind the reader, then, that we are now reasoning from the point of view of persons who regard Christianity without doctrines as not being Christianity at all; who believe in these doctrines, or else desire to believe in them; and who in either case are anxious to find some means —some theory, some hypothesis, by which a belief in them may be reasonably justified to ourselves, and commended reasonably to others.

Now these doctrines which we desire to place on a reasonable basis, are some of them historical,

like the doctrine of the Virgin birth; some of them philosophical, like the doctrine of the Trinity, or like any doctrine of the sacraments: but they are all of them beyond the reach of ordinary proof or evidence. The proof, therefore, which we desire to find, will be a proof which we, in any case, must assume by an act of faith. The theory of the consensus, the theory of the interior witness, the theory of the inerrancy of the primitive Christian Church—each of them, had we adopted it, would have had to be assumed thus. All these theories we have seen to be insufficient; but this was not because an act of faith would have been required of us in order to hold them. Their insufficiency consisted in the fact that, even if we started with assuming them to be true, they would, in the first place, stultify our assumption by being logically inconsistent with themselves, and, in the second place, they would be entirely unable to lead us to the conclusions we desiderate. As to many points they would lead us to no conclusion at all; as to others they would lead different minds to conclusions of the most opposite character. The kind of proof, the kind of theory, the kind of theological hypothesis we are in search of, is an hypothesis which, when once by an act of faith we have assumed it, is logically consistent with itself, and from which, as from a single principle, all the other

doctrines belonging to our faith will follow—these, and these only, all others being condemned by it.

The three Anglican theories when taken in the form which Anglicans and all other Protestants are, as Protestants, compelled to give them, fail completely to fulfil these necessary conditions. Each, let it be said once more, is logically inconsistent with itself; the doctrines held by no Anglican party can be deduced as certainties from any one of them; and though some Anglican divines, like the Dean of Canterbury, try, as we have seen, to make use of them all together, each of these theories is inconsistent with the two others. If the interior witness is really our sole authority, it is an impertinence to refer us to the primitive Church or to the consensus of all the Churches. If the primitive Church is really our sole authority, the interior witness and the consensus are not authorities at all; and if the consensus of all the Churches is the sole authority that is sufficient, the primitive Church is an imperfect authority, and the interior witness an untrustworthy one.

Having done this, let us turn to another theory which the English Church repudiates.

We have now, however, at last reached a point in our argument when a further fact, which hitherto has been only glanced at, must be brought within the circle of our vision and receive our minute attention. Utterly inefficient as these Anglican theories are, hopelessly inconsistent as

they are alike with themselves and with one another, we have only to supplement them with the assumption of one principle more, and we shall find that suddenly their whole character changes. They cease to be inefficient, they cease to be contradictory. They become consistent with themselves; they coalesce with and support each other; and they form together a logical and luminous whole —a theory which will succeed in doing for us all we ask of it, as signally as they, when taken by themselves, fail. Whether this theory be objectively true or no, we have only by an act of faith to assume its truth, and the truth of all these doctrines which we desire to defend follows from it. Christianity as a doctrinal fabric is placed on a logical basis, which science and criticism have no power to destroy; and which, moreover, as we shall in due course see, is not indeed corroborated by any definite scientific proof—for this would be from the nature of the case impossible—but is commended to our acceptance by all the weight of scientific analogy, and by the entire trend of the modern philosophy of evolution.

We shall find that if this be added to the Anglican theory of the consensus, it makes it logical, and changes the whole situation.

The additional principle by the assumption of which this remarkable change will be accomplished, is the principle which is logically the basis of the Roman system of theology; and to understand it we must go to the Roman Church—not necessarily

This is the Roman theory of an infallible Church with a definite organ of utterance.

because we have any sympathy with Roman doctrines as generally understood by Protestants, but simply because, alone of all religious bodies, Rome assumes this principle as the basis of its intellectual life. This principle is the assumption on the part of the teaching body, that as a teaching body—as a corporation that never dies, it always has been, is, and always will be infallible. Now the first fact which we shall realise, when we consider how this principle is applied, is that it gives us what is practically the Anglican theory of the consensus, changed only by being rendered logical, effective, and complete. The Anglican theory, by the addition to it of this principle, is affected precisely as a wheel without an axis is affected by having an axis supplied to it; or as a bridge with an arch wanting, is, for practical purposes, affected by having the missing arch built. The Anglican theory makes the consensus useless, because it is obliged to deny to it, or at all events is unable to endow it with, the three primary things essential to its practical utility—namely, an endorsement by itself of the claim the theory makes for it; some means of stating and recording the decisions at which it arrives; and an undisturbed continuity of authority from the earliest times till now. All these three wants the Roman principle supplies. In the Councils it provides the consensus with a definite

organ of utterance; by limiting the consensus to the Roman Church itself, it secures for it its own evidence in favour of its own authority; and the unbroken continuity of this authority it vindicates by the same means. Thus metamorphosed and vitalised by the logical completion of itself, the theory of the consensus, so useless in Anglican hands, becomes everything that Anglicans in vain try to make it.

This theory absorbs, moreover, the two other Anglican theories—

But the effect of the Roman principle does not end here. Besides completing and vitalising the Anglican theory of the consensus, it completes, vitalises, and unites with this same theory, those two other Anglican theories which taken by themselves are so inconsistent with it—the theory of the authority of the primitive Church, and the theory also of the authority of the interior witness.

namely, that of the authority of the primitive Church,

How the former is thus affected can be seen at a single glance. For no sooner is the consensus presented to us as a single and continuous authority, than the teaching of the primitive Church, instead of being separated from or opposed to the fuller teaching of the Church in subsequent ages, comes merely to represent for us, in so far as it was clear and unanimous, the voice of the consensus in its earliest stage of development, when its authority was essentially the same as it is now, but had applied itself only to a narrower range of

questions. The manner in which the theory of the interior witness is successively absorbed and rationalised by the Roman system is perhaps less self-evident; but a very brief explanation will make it equally clear.

and that of the witness of the Christian consciousness of the individual.

According to ordinary Protestant opinion, the doctrines of the Church of Rome represent a structure built up by the misguided ingenuity of priests, and imposed by them on a credulous and passive laity; but the truth, in reality, is the exact reverse of this. It is the world of ordinary believers that has imposed its beliefs on the priests; not the priests that have imposed theirs on the world of ordinary believers. Let us take, for instance, the Roman doctrine of the Eucharist, or the belief implied in the *cultus* of the Virgin Mary. That the sacramental elements were actually the body and blood of Christ; that the Redeemer, who died on the Cross for each individual sinner, entered, under the form of these elements, into each sinner's body—entered, bearing the stripes on it by which the sinner was healed, and mixing with the sinner's blood the divine blood that had been shed for him—this was the belief of the common unlettered communicant, long before priests and theologians had, by the aid of Aristotle, explained the assumed miracle as a process of transubstantiation, and longer still, before their philosophic explanation was,

by the ratification of any General Council, given its place among the definite teachings of the Church. Similarly, the devotion to the Virgin Mary first sprung up amongst the mass of believers naturally, because the idea of God's mother with all her motherly love, with all her virgin purity, and with all her human sorrows, allied so closely to omnipotence, touched countless hearts in a way which was in all cases practically similar; just as the offer of a helping hand would make a similar appeal to each one of a multitude of men drowning. The official teaching of Rome with regard to the Virgin's sinlessness, and the degree of worship which is her due, has been the work, no doubt, of the few, not of the many—of priests, of theologians, of Councils. But the doctrines which have been thus defined, have been not fabricated by themselves. The doctrines have had their origin in the pious opinions which have spontaneously shaped themselves in the minds of innumerable Christians, as the result of a multitude of independent spiritual experiences. Gradually theologians have reduced these to logical and coherent forms; and at last they have been submitted to one great representative Council. This Council, which, according to the Roman theory, is guarded from error by the special assistance of the Holy Spirit, considers how far these doctrines are consistent with doctrines already

defined, and with one another; and how far, explicitly or implicitly, there is any warrant for them in the Scriptures. It ends with rejecting some, whilst others are harmonised and affirmed by it; and then these last are added to the authoritative teaching of the Church.[1]

Thus the spiritual experience of the individual, and the evidence of the interior witness, lie at the root of Roman doctrine, just as they do of Evangelical; the difference being that whereas, according to the Evangelical theory, they supply each individual with doctrine by some direct and separate process, each individual with his experience, according to the Roman theory, is merely one out of an immense multitude, who jointly supply the material from which doctrine is ultimately shaped. In one case only is there an exception to this rule, and that is the case of the initial assent made by the individual to the claims of the Church generally. The doctrinal operation here of the individual's experience is direct, just as it is when a man, for reasons which he could hardly analyse, feels himself convinced that some other man is trustworthy, and consequently accepts as true whatever this man tells him. This is a point to which we shall recur presently. For the

[1] The above account of Roman doctrine is taken, with little alteration, from my work *Aristocracy and Evolution*, book iii. chap. ii.

moment it is enough to observe that whilst the Evangelical theory of the spiritual experience of the individual is reduced to an absurdity by the fact, on which the Dean of Canterbury insists, that such experience leads individuals "*equally sincere and able*" to the most diverse and most contradictory conclusions, the same theory as incorporated in the Roman system, whilst still vindicating for Christianity its foundation in the individual consciousness, leads all individuals, however their experiences may vary, to doctrinal conclusions which are absolutely one and the same.

We thus see, then, how the Roman theory of authority absorbs into itself all the others which have been devised to take its place, making them at once efficient, logical, and harmonious. We may, indeed, say of them with the strictest truth, "*They are but broken parts of thee*"—dead when torn from the body to which properly they belong, living when reunited to it. And now let us proceed with our consideration of the Roman theory itself; and let us begin by examining more closely those three essential characteristics which it adds to the authority of the consensus as Anglicans so incompletely imagine it, and by adding which it turns confusion into reasonable and scientific order. These three characteristics, it need hardly be said again, are—a definite organ of utterance; unbroken

Let us now return to the consensus theory as offered us by the Church of Rome

historical continuity; and logical consistency with itself: and obvious as their importance is, even at a first glance, we shall find it, when we examine them closely, to be deeper even than at first appears.

By its gift of definite utterance the Roman Church not only defines doctrine,

Let us take first the definite organ of utterance with which the consensus is endowed by the Roman system. If the consensus of the Church is an authority for any definite doctrines at all, to say that it must be able to enunciate them in some definite form, is to say what, in one sense, is little more than a truism. But this definiteness of utterance which the Roman consensus possesses, not only enables Christian doctrine to be defined; but by enabling it to be defined it enables it to progress and develop, and thus at once secures for the Roman Church continuous growth as an evidence of its continuous life. The Dean of Canterbury admits that a Christianity which is not progressive will necessarily become corrupt; and though in saying this he is contradicting certain of his own first principles, he is merely saying what, with a similar inconsistency, other Evangelical thinkers feel and say likewise. They all premise that no doctrinal system can continue to be accepted by the world, or can exercise any influence over it, if it does not expand with the expansion of knowledge generally. Many Protestants indeed object

but also enables it to progress.

to the definiteness of Roman doctrine on the ground that it makes progress impossible, by imprisoning the truth for ever in forms that must soon grow obsolete. No view of the matter, however, could be more false than this. Rigidity of doctrinal definition, instead of preventing progress, is, within certain limits, one of the chief and most indispensable conditions of it. Unless certain elements in a religion always remain the same, the religion may change indefinitely, it may dissolve altogether, or may metamorphose itself into something else; but it will exhibit none of the features of a progressive and developing identity.

It is, of course, conceivable that the rigid formulation of doctrine might take place in such a way as to produce the effect imputed to it, of stereotyping religious thought, and crushing the life out of it; but the point here insisted on is not that rigidity of a certain kind might not check progress, but that rigidity of one kind or another is absolutely necessary to produce it. Let us take, for example, the question of the inspiration of the Scriptures. The exact sense in which they are inspired Rome has never yet defined; but the fact that Rome is irrevocably committed to the doctrine that they are inspired in some sense in which no other writings are, and is ready to re-affirm this as often as circumstances may require,

allows Roman theologians much greater freedom of thought in dealing with the speculative problem of what inspiration is, than is possible for Protestants, unless, like our Broad Churchmen, they are prepared to surrender the doctrine of special inspiration altogether. Let us take again the doctrines of the Trinity and of Transubstantiation, of which Rome is the rigid and the essentially uncompromising guardian. Neither of these doctrines is supposed by Roman theology to exhaust the mystery with which it deals. If, as thought and knowledge develop, and men's spiritual conceptions expand, the Trinity, and the Sacrament of the Altar, reveal themselves under new aspects, this is nothing but what Roman theology would regard as perfectly natural; but any fuller comprehension of either mystery which may be in store for us, would, according to that theology, not supersede or change the doctrines which the Church has already formulated with regard to it. It would merely add to their meaning, endowing it with a new profundity; and such an enlargement of their meaning would be possible only on this condition—that the original doctrines remained with their validity unimpaired. We may some day learn to appreciate other aspects of the Trinity than those which are comprehended by the terms "substance" and "person"; but unless the Trinity is to evaporate into a mere

Roman Christianity is capable of continuous growth and adaptation.

literary symbol, the doctrine of substance and person must be kept intact as a statement of what is absolutely true so far as the statement goes. We may some day learn to perceive that Christ's bodily presence on the altar means more than could be expressed by the philosophical doctrine of Transubstantiation; but this perception that his bodily presence is more wonderful than we had once thought it, must be based on the continuance of a belief which assures us that it is not less real. Other Churches, other religious bodies, might conceivably have adopted a system identical with this of Rome, and exemplified its operation by the development of totally different doctrines. But the system belongs, as a fact, to Rome, and to Rome only; and the sole examples of its operation which the history of mankind offers us, are those offered us by the development of doctrine within that one Communion—the only Communion in which there has been any vital development at all.

The continuity of authority claimed by Rome is the sole means by which doctrine can be preserved as well as developed.

And now let us turn to the second characteristic of Rome—namely, the continuity of authority which accompanies its succession of doctrinal utterances. The importance of this is twofold. In the first place, as has been pointed out already, if doctrinal infallibility, and the power of defining doctrine, instead of being preserved by the Church up to the present day, have been lost by it—which is

what the Ritualists say—in consequence of the great Schism, or have mysteriously exhausted themselves —which is what the Dean of Canterbury says—in the effort of formulating the Creeds, Christianity can never come to any coherent terms with modern thought and knowledge, and the temper of mind engendered by them; for in no definite, intelligible, and authoritative way can it ever be able to restate its case, or defend it. The fact, therefore, that Rome is provided by the Roman theory with a teaching authority, which it never has lost or can lose, which is as living to-day as on the day of the first Council; which is as ready to meet the scientific discoveries of the future as it ever was to meet the philosophic thought of the past; and which is destined, perhaps, to unfold to us a body of Christian doctrine wider and deeper even than that which it has unfolded and defined already — the fact that Rome is provided with an authority of this indestructible kind, is the feature by which that Church is most clearly shown to be the one Christian body still possessing the means of presenting Christian doctrine to the modern world as a body of truths supported by a system of definite proofs, and destined, like other truths, to develop as knowledge widens.

A Church without absolute continuity of

But this absolute continuity of authority which, alone of all the Churches, the Church of Rome

infallible authority is like a man who tells us about the past having admittedly lost his memory.

claims in a logical and complete form, fulfils another function, perhaps even more important, though it is not equally obvious. The nature of this function, and the importance of it, can be briefly indicated by saying that with respect to all matters, such as supernatural doctrine, which are not amenable to the support of ordinary evidence, the authority of a teaching body which claims to speak infallibly can only remain authoritative so long as it remains continuous. If this body ceases to speak as a living voice in the present, it can no longer claim our credence for anything it has enunciated in the past. This can best be explained by means of a simple analogy.

The net result of the Roman theory of the Church regarded as a witness and teacher of Christian doctrine, is to endow that vast body with a single undying personality—an unbroken personal consciousness. Accordingly, when in this character of a single undying individual, it vouches for the reality of such events as the Virgin birth of Christ, his descent into Hell, or his Ascension, or again for the constant reappearance of his body on the Christian altars, the Church may be compared to a traveller speaking of things that took place long since, or are taking place still, in some country which has never been visited by any of those addressed by him, or indeed by any stranger, the

traveller himself excepted. He, however, claims not only to have been there once, but by some mysterious means to be in constant communication with its inhabitants, and thus to be able to give authentic news to his countrymen of all that has happened there in the past, and is happening there to-day.

Now it is plain that our belief in this traveller's tales, or our disbelief, depends primarily on whether or no we believe that he has ever actually been in this mysterious country at all; and secondarily, if we persuade ourselves that he has been there, on whether or no we feel confidence in his memory. As to the question of whether he has been there at all, it is plain that we, if we settle to believe that he has, must believe it solely on the strength of his own testimony, for as no one else has been there, no one else can corroborate it; and our estimate of the value of his testimony will depend partly on the opinion which, during our intercourse with him, we form of his moral character, and partly on the consistency with which he repeats his stories, and the general consistency of these stories with one another. We need not try to specify with any completeness those signs of trustworthiness which we shall require in his stories or in himself; but there is one at all events which we shall require as the condition of our recognising

any. This is that the traveller shall be himself prepared to assert that he possesses the quality of trustworthiness with which he asks us to credit him; and that, if we cross-question him, he shall be able to assure us further that he possesses the specific faculties on which trustworthiness necessarily depends. Of these faculties the chief is a strong and unswerving memory. Unless our traveller can assure us that he possesses this, we can have no possible ground for believing what he tells us at all.

Let us suppose that a year ago he gave us a long account of what was happening in the mysterious country twenty years before. The confidence with which he spoke impressed us with the idea of his veracity; we made notes of what he told us, and pondered over it with the deepest interest. But let us suppose that he comes back to us to-day, and on being questioned by us again about the subject, says that he not only can tell us nothing more about the country, but that he has quite forgotten what it was that he told us previously, the fact being that he has no memory whatsoever for anything that happened more than a week ago. What will become of the opinion which we entertained of his previous statements? In addition to finding that he is unable to amplify and explain them, we shall come to the conclusion

that no explanation of them is required, and that they were, from beginning to end, the products of his own imagination. For how, we shall ask, could a man, who is unable year by year to recall anything that he was doing the year before, have been able last year to recount with extreme minuteness what he saw and did at a period removed from him by a quarter of a century? If his former statements had been of a kind susceptible of proof, it would, of course, be conceivable that we might, in the meanwhile, have verified them; and accordingly continued our belief in them, though he might have ceased to believe in them himself. But this is precisely what, *ex hypothesi*, his former statements were not. They referred to a country which had been visited by himself, or else by nobody; and they rest on the authority of his own character and faculties, or else they rest upon no authority at all. If, then, this traveller admits that he is incapable to-day of vouching for any of the marvels he told us himself yesterday, the entire grounds on which yesterday we were inclined to believe in him are gone. He not only can tell us no longer anything which we can take for true; but he takes away our belief in everything that he told us before. He leaves us indeed without any reason for supposing that he had ever been to the country which he set himself so ostentatiously to describe.

In the same way, if the Church spoke with confidence on doctrinal points yesterday—at the time of the promulgation of the Creeds, or up to the time of the Schism—but admits that since then it has become wholly unable, not only to define any new doctrines, but even to re-affirm those defined already, or to assure us that any true power of defining them was ever really possessed by it, we too cease, as soon as this admission is made, to have any grounds for believing that it possessed this power ourselves: and all the old doctrines which it enunciated with such solemn care, are deprived of the sole authority on which we ever gave our assent to them. Now such is the position of the Church as a teaching body, according to every theory of it, with the exception of the theory of Rome. Rome is the only Church representing itself as an ever-living and articulate individual, which at no period of its existence has lost any one of its faculties, but is able every day to re-affirm, with a living voice, every doctrine which it has ever authoritatively enunciated in the past — to re-affirm it now in virtue of the same supernatural knowledge; and to re-affirm it, moreover, with an ever-deepening meaning.

Finally, the Roman theory of the consensus is confirmed by

Finally, let us note once more, that the Roman theory of infallibility — of the divinely-guided

teaching power of the consensus of the entire Church—is the only theory of a consensus which starts with the advantage of being confirmed, instead of contradicted, by the very authority which it itself invokes. For all of the Protestant theories of the consensus have inevitably a consensus against them; the Church of Rome rejecting them in explicit terms, and the vast majority of Protestants either ignoring them or regarding them with contempt. But Rome, by limiting the status of complete Catholic citizenship to members of its own Communion, of its own spiritual Empire, secures for the theory of the consensus as held and put forward by itself, the support, complete and unhesitating, of the sole consensus which it recognises.

a consensus of all those to whom it appeals;

Protestants, of course, and our Ritualistic party especially, join issue with Rome on this question of Catholic citizenship, declaring that that Church, by this very act of exclusion, has made of itself the great schismatic body of Christendom. It is not unnatural that they should look at the matter thus. They seem, indeed, to be justified, by ample evidence, when they maintain that the claim made by Rome, after all the secessions from its Communion, after all the condemnations of its doctrine by so many millions of Christians, to remain the one true and undivided Church of Christ, is arbitrary,

arrogant, absurd, contrary to all evidence. But the absurder and more arbitrary this claim appears on the surface, the stronger and more startling shall we find the support to be which it provides for itself by its own internal character, when illuminated by the light which events are gradually throwing on it. For when we examine this claim of Rome to be that one Catholic Church to which Christ promised the infallible and unending guidance of the Spirit, and when we analyse the assumptions and principles of which this claim is composed, we shall find that these assumptions and principles are precisely those which are logically required in order to enable a Church to sustain this unique character; and that all the other Churches, which have either lost or rejected them, are logically unable to make the least pretence to it. Rome, in fact, in its capacity of the one infallible teacher, resembles a sailor in a shipwreck, who, alone of all his companions, has retained the swimming apparatus with which all were originally provided, and who, when derided by his companions for boasting that he alone can swim, answers them by continuing on the surface, whilst they, one and all, go under it.

and the fact that Rome has retained this logically essential theory, is itself an argument in favour of the claim of Rome to be the one true Church.

The very fact, therefore, that Rome is able, with the most rigid logic, to offer itself to the world as an infallible teaching body, whilst none

of the Churches that have seceded from it can even pretend to do so, is in itself evidence of a very striking kind, that if any Church had ever any teaching power at all, the claim of Rome to represent that Church is sound. And this evidence, drawn from the vitality of the Roman principle, from the manner in which we may actually see it working, is all the more remarkable, because at the critical time when the great secession from the Roman Church took place, it was impossible that anybody could have foreseen the full importance of the part which this principle of infallibility would be one day called upon to play. The Protestants rejected it, with no suspicion of what they were losing: the Roman Church retained it, imperfectly comprehending what it retained. It is only now, when the rains and floods of criticism descend and beat on the whole doctrinal edifice, washing away the sands on which Protestant thought rested it, that the true functions of an articulate and infallible Church, of a Church always the same and yet always developing, become apparent. It is only now, when men find themselves planted by modern knowledge in a new world unknown to the theologians and the apologists of the past, that, desiring still to retain the heritage of their ancient faith, they realise the full necessity for the guidance of a living teacher, whose authority is not indeed opposed to

that of science, but is independent of it, and though not contradicting anything which science demonstrates, is able to assure us of the truth of events and things which scientific evidence alone could not even render probable.

CHAPTER X

On the manner in which the theory discussed in the last chapter exhibits the growth of supernatural doctrine as a process analogous to the processes revealed to us by biological science.

The objective truthfulness of the Roman, or any Church, as a teacher, must be accepted by an act of faith.

It will, of course, be said that this argument on behalf of the theory of Rome is, after all, merely an argument in the air; that the utmost it goes to show is that the Roman theory is a thinkable theory, not that it is, in any objective sense, true. And let this be granted. It has indeed been already insisted on. But the reader must recollect that the same thing may be said of any theory of any supernatural teaching whatsoever. The objective truth of it must be assented to by an act of faith. Faith, however, itself, though it does not originate in reason, is not independent of its guidance; and if various theories of authority are competing for its adhesion, its adhesion in the long-run will be given to the theory which is most consistent with itself, most efficient as an hypothesis, and most in harmony with the scheme of things, as positive knowledge reveals it to us. If, then, we assume

in our inquiries—as in the present case we are avowedly doing—that some supernatural teaching authority is a possibility, the question of how completely Rome fulfils the above conditions is so far from being a mere question in the air, that it is a question for us of the first practical moment.

But the Roman claim is fortified, not only by its logical coherency,

What, then, we have seen of Rome in the preceding chapter is this—that it is, in its capacity of an authoritative and teaching body, what no other Church can make itself by the aid of any possible theory: that is to say, a structure logically coherent and complete. As an authoritative body it is consistent with its own first principles of authority. As a teaching body it is provided with an articulate teaching organ. As a body which has not to teach something once for all, then leaving it to take care of itself, but to teach this and vouch for it anew to each successive generation, it is provided with a principle of perpetual and undiminishing vitality; and whilst thus teaching its doctrines over and over again, it is provided with an apparatus which enables it, without denying or disintegrating them, to expand them, to develop them, and also to add to their number.

And now, having before us this general picture of the Roman intellectual system as a structurally complete organisation for the maintenance of a

body of doctrines which lie entirely outside the limits of objective proof, let us see how, as a matter of fact, this system has worked historically, and what it has actually done for us as the teacher of doctrinal Christianity.

but also by the most striking analogies of modern science;

Protestants who have not been accustomed to view the matter from a purely intellectual standpoint, will find, when they come to do so, reason for considerable surprise. For whenever Protestant doctrines and Roman doctrines are contrasted, in a general way, by thinkers outside the Roman Church, it is invariably assumed that, whether the former are true or no, they at all events are the outcome of a more reasonable and scientific habit of mind than the latter are, and are more in harmony with the free and natural progress of knowledge. We shall find, however, if only we put prejudice and sentiment aside, and confine ourselves to considerations which are really of a scientific kind, that it is Christian doctrine as presented to us by the Roman Church which offers us the closest analogy to the teachings of modern science; whilst the doctrinal systems of Protestantism, if in harmony with secular thought at all, are in harmony with the secular thought of a pre-scientific epoch, reproducing by analogy all the crude conceptions which it is the special boast and glory of modern science to have superseded.

for whilst the Protestant conceives of doctrine as given by a series of independent revelations, Rome conceives of it as an orderly intellectual growth,

In order to see how such is the case, let us, before we go into details, consider the difference in general character between the Christian system of doctrine as put before us by Rome, and the Christian system of doctrine as put before us by doctrinal Protestants. The difference is somewhat similar to that which exists with regard to the origin of species, between the Darwinian theory of evolution and the theory of special creations. For whilst the doctrines of Christianity as put before us by Protestantism, are put before us either as a number of complete and separate revelations, made once for all in the remote past, or revealed in a series of spasmodic illuminations to individuals, the doctrines of Christianity as put before us by Rome, are put before us as the results of an orderly process of development, which starts indeed from a germ—from a mustard-seed—of truth supernaturally planted, but follows thenceforward the laws of ordinary scientific knowledge, one doctrine gradually unfolding itself and growing out of another, and the fulness of truth lying always in the future rather than the past. It will thus be seen that, judged from the Roman standpoint, the ordinary attack made by Protestants on a number of Roman doctrines, on the ground that they are not primitive, is absolutely beside the mark, and indicates a condition of mind resembling that of a

man who should condemn on similar grounds the doctrines of modern chemistry. Rome admits that, within limits, the doctrine of the primitive Church was true, but does not admit that it expressed the whole of the truth. It implied the whole of the truth, just as every physical phenomenon implies the whole physics of the universe; but it expressed only so much of it as the primitive Church could understand, a fuller understanding and expression of it being left for subsequent centuries.

It is hardly necessary to point out to the reader that this Roman theory of the doctrines of doctrinal Christianity assigns them an origin similar to that of all scientific knowledge; whilst, according to all Protestant theories, it is grotesquely and fantastically different. And now let us put the matter to a more practical test. Let us apply the Roman theory to those doctrines, in particular, which modern historical criticism has specially singled out for attack; and we shall see that whilst the attack is fatal if we adopt any of the theories of the Protestants, the Roman theory not only renders it harmless, but actually converts it into an illustration of the precise process from which, according to it, the validity of the doctrines is derived.

It has already been pointed out in a previous

and in particular as supernaturally-guided assimilation of all natural knowledge.

chapter that, whereas the principal result of historical criticism on the Old Testament has been the revolution effected by it in our conception of the origin and history of the text, the principal result it has had on the New Testament has been the revolution it has effected in our conception of what the text records—of the historical events, and especially of the theological and speculative ideas. It has long been recognised that certain elements in Christian theology, from the times of St. John and St. Paul to the times of the Nicene Council, were appropriated by Christian thinkers from non-Christian sources—partly from Greek philosophy, partly from the jurisprudence of Rome; the doctrine of the Word being taken from the former source, and certain theories of the Atonement from the latter: and this process, moreover, was, as is even more notorious, continued by the Roman Church in its doctrine of Transubstantiation. But recent research has, in the most remarkable way, enlarged our knowledge of this branch of theological history, and has shown us this process extending itself even further than was first anticipated. It has shown us that not only the theology of the Church after Christ's death, but the theological ideas of Christ himself and his disciples—ideas which were formerly believed to have been brought down straight from heaven—likewise had their

origin in ordinary human thought, partly Jewish, in great part purely Gentile; and that Christ, instead of having originated them, found them, adopted them, and made them the basis of his teaching. Whatever we may think of this or that critical opinion in detail, the general truth of what has just been said is undeniable; and in order to impress it as vividly as possible on the reader's mind, let me quote once more a passage that has been quoted already from the argument addressed to Lord Halifax by Mrs. Humphry Ward.

"*We now know*," says Mrs. Ward, "*that Christianity is a system of ideas, was more than half in existence before the Lord lived and taught—that its distinctive doctrines of the Kingdom, the Son of Man, heaven and hell, angels and devils, resurrection, soul and spirit, were the familiar furniture of the minds amongst which it arose. The interest of the problem has really very much shifted from the two hundred years after the Crucifixion to the two hundred years before it. The doctrine of a pre-existent Messiah, the elements of the doctrine of a suffering Messiah, the 'heavenly man' of St. Paul, the whole rich and varied conception of the after-life and its conditions, to say nothing of that whole 'theosophy trembling on the verge of becoming a religion,'*

as it has been called, which the thought of Philo produced on Hellenistic ground—all these were already in existence long before the Galilean ministry, or before the First Epistle to the Thessalonians."

I have quoted Mrs. Ward here, as also on a former occasion, because, besides being a scholar of high attainments, though not an original critic, she is also an admirable type of intellectual common sense, as applied to the results of criticism on our conception of Christian doctrine. What then is the conclusion with regard to Christian doctrine which Mrs. Ward draws from the facts which she thus summarises? It is the conclusion to which all thinkers must sooner or later be led, who have been brought up to view Christian doctrine from the intellectual standpoint of Protestantism. Her conclusion is this, that none of the doctrinal propositions of Christianity which deal with matters outside the limits of ordinary proof or experience, have been supernaturally revealed by God, or are in any objective sense true. We trace them, she argues, to sources for which inspiration is claimed by nobody. We trace them to the religions of Babylon, Persia, and Egypt; and the philosophising of Jewish Rabbis, touched by Hellenic culture: and she concludes by saying that "*what is popular speculation, the adaptation of Babylonian and*

Thus the argument of Mrs. Ward and others that doctrines cannot have been revealed, because they have a natural origin, though fatal to Protestant dogmatism,

Persian ideas, or theosophic philosophising, from a Greek or Palestinian basis, cannot immediately become inspiration in the Apostles." She points out, moreover, that the inevitable nature of this conclusion is being recognised more and more clearly by increasing bodies of Christians both in this country and America; whilst the same phenomenon, as other evidence shows us, is repeating itself amongst educated Protestants throughout France and Germany. And from the Protestant point of view this conclusion is indeed inevitable. If Christian doctrine can be traced to sources admittedly natural, and can be proved to owe its accepted and orthodox form to processes of thought indistinguishable from those of the ordinary thinker and controversialist, Christian doctrine must, on Protestant principles, be a system of purely human philosophy, credible once, but now as completely obsolete as the Ptolemaic astronomy or the physical science of the alchemists.

does not touch Roman dogmatism.

But let us shift our ground by a single intellectual movement. Let us pass from the standpoint of Protestantism to that of the Church of Rome; let us apply to the problem the hypothesis of an ever-living and infallible Church: and the effects of historical criticism on Christian doctrine change. Its secular origin remains as a proved and admitted fact; but the fact has for us a

totally different meaning. Instead of showing us that Christian doctrine has not a divine origin also, it shows us what the nature of its divine origin is; and establishes a harmony between it and the universal processes of nature. It has already been said that the Roman principle of infallibility has the effect of imparting to the Catholic Church a unity analogous to that possessed by a single living individual whose memory reaches back to the very beginnings of Christianity; and is not only capable, on occasion, of enunciating new doctrines, under the special guidance of the Spirit vouchsafed to it on the day of Pentecost, but is constantly reaffirming the doctrines already enumerated. Now this analogy between the Roman Church and a single living individual is not a mere literary analogy used to help the imagination of the reader. It is an analogy which results from an actual scientific identity. We shall see that such is the case more fully hereafter. For the present let us assume the fact, and consider certain of its consequences. Let us take any living and growing thing, from an oak-tree to a human being. The oak-tree, with its mass of leaves, branches, and timber, develops from an acorn which would lie in a baby's hand; but the tons of material which make up the developed tree do not exist in the acorn. They are drawn from external sources, and

if otherwise assimilated they would make up not an oak but an elm. In the same way when the baby grows gradually to be a man, its increased bulk does not come from itself. It is made up of a variety of extraneous substances, which, if otherwise assimilated, would produce a very different result, and instead of turning a baby into a man, would turn a kitten into a cat.

In the same way the Church, according to the Roman theory, grows as a teaching body by the assimilation of beliefs and philosophies, which need, in their original form, have been no more Christian or supernatural than the food eaten by a child is, in its original form, human; than the timber and leaves of the oak were part of the material of the acorn; or—to take the simile of Christ himself—than the branches of the tree in which the fowls of the air build are made out of materials comprised in the original grain of mustard-seed. Just as the tree or the human being absorbs into its organic system, materials belonging to the water, earth, and air, selecting some and rejecting others, casting away certain portions of all, and painfully purging itself of what is unwholesome or poisonous, so does the Church, according to the Roman theory, select, test, and assimilate, from all human knowledge and thought, the materials which, by being assimilated, become supernatural truth. Thus, according to this

theory, Mrs. Ward is totally wrong in arguing that what was popular speculation, and the adaptation of Babylonian and Persian ideas from a Greek or Palestinian basis, cannot become inspiration when it is assimilated by the Christian Church. She might as well argue that what is beef, mutton-chops, and beer, when viewed from a butcher's or brewer's basis, cannot immediately become part of a living human being when eaten and assimilated by the human being that buys them.

This insight into the character of the Roman Church has only been made possible by the recent growth of social and biological science.

Protestants, and critics who have been brought up as Protestants, invariably fail to understand the doctrinal system of Rome, because their own conception of doctrine is absolutely unscientific; and they consequently experience the greatest difficulty in conceiving what a really scientific theory of Christian doctrine is. Indeed it may be said that the Roman Church itself developed without being conscious of its own scientific character, just as men were for ages unconscious of the circulation of their own blood; and that this scientific character could not be apparent to anybody, until science in general had, with increasing thoroughness, changed our conceptions of all the processes of existence. But however this may be, it is at all events possible now to show, by the light of modern scientific discoveries, how close is the parallel between these processes and the

development of Roman doctrine, as just now described.

Mr. Herbert Spencer has shown, with abundance of minute illustration, that the analogy between animal and social organisms is such, that it is possible to make discoveries with regard to the one by means of discoveries that have been made with regard to the other. We are not concerned here to insist on this particular fact. It is mentioned only in order to bring home to the reader, how close, how vital, how real, the analogy in question is; and no example of it can be more striking and complete than that offered by the assimilation of doctrine on the part of the Church of Rome, and the assimilation of food or other nutritive substances on the part of a seed, a tree, a plant, or an animal. The Roman Church, like an animal seeking nutriment, puts forth its feelers or tentacles on all sides, seizing, tasting, and testing all forms of human thought, all human opinions, and all alleged discoveries. It absorbs some of these into itself, and extracts their nutritive principles; it immediately rejects some as poisonous or indigestible; and gradually expels from its system others, condemned as heresies, which it has accidentally or experimentally swallowed. Now none of the parallel processes in the growth or nutrition of an animal give us any indication of what its

individual character is. They give us, for instance, in the case of a man no indication of his temper, his intellect, his moral principles, his religion—of his nature generally as a conscious human being. The beggarly elements change, as his system absorbs them, into a unity which is incomparable with themselves, and the salient features of which have in these elements no traceable existence. And precisely the same is the case with the doctrinal system of Rome. The external thoughts, speculations, and discoveries which it absorbs into itself, become, by being absorbed, something that they were not before. They are metamorphosed into what they are by some special living agency contained originally in the germ from which the Church sprang, just as the elements of earth and air and water are changed into a tree by means of a grain of mustard-seed, or into a man by means of the seed which grew human in the maternal womb.

The analyses supplied by sociology and biology throw a most singular light on the growth of Roman doctrine,

The more carefully this process of doctrinal assimilation is examined, the more complete is the answer which we shall find in it, not only to those critics who argue, like Mrs. Ward, that all supernatural doctrine is false, because it has a demonstrably natural origin; but to those critics also who, accepting it in its Protestant form, endeavour to discredit its distinctively Roman

developments by exposing the history of the Councils to which these developments were due, the circumstances under which they were assembled, the purely secular influences brought to bear on the members, the intrigues and ambitions of this party and that, and the obsolete, inept, or fantastic character of the arguments on which the decisions and definitions finally reached were founded. For the Romanist such criticism is absolutely without point; and has, indeed, in a very remarkable manner, been anticipated and disposed of by the Council of Trent. The Council of Trent draws the clearest possible distinction between the final decisions of a Council, and the various human agencies, by the working together of which the final decisions were arrived at. The sacred character claimed for the former, is not claimed for the latter; and need not—the Council distinctly says—attach to them. This principle is explained and illustrated by a special reference to one of the intellectual processes through which, so far as their own consciousness can inform them, the theologians of a Council reach their doctrinal conclusions. The process referred to consists of arguments drawn from Scripture, and based on the assumption that such and such Scriptural texts were written in order to convey a particular doctrinal meaning. Such being the case, the Council of Trent declares

and the manner in which it is claimed that the Spirit guides the Church.

that, although the doctrines, when at last they have been formally ratified by the Council, are to be accepted as utterances of the Holy and Infallible Spirit, no such infallibility attaches to the train of reasoning by which the members of the Council as human beings have reached them; and that although, as human beings, they might never have reached them at all if they had not attributed certain meanings to the Scriptural texts they built upon, it does not follow, and it is not necessary to believe, that these texts in reality have the meaning attributed to them. The texts, in reality, may mean something totally different from what the members of the Council thought; but the truth of the conclusion is unaffected by any such error in the premises. And if this holds good of error in formal argument, it holds good equally of errors or sins in conduct. Just as the treachery of Judas and the weakness of Pontius Pilate played their part in the consummation of Christ's sacrifice, so, if the Church be what the Roman theory represents it, will the cabals and intrigues incident to Ecclesiastical Councils play their part in the formulation of supernatural truth.

Protestants, indeed, though this idea is strange to them, ought not to experience any great difficulty in understanding it; for it is really identical with one which, in a less scientific form,

is devoutly cherished by themselves—namely, the idea of special providences. A special providence, as the ordinary Protestant conceives of it, is some occurrence which proximately is determined by natural causes, but happens to be so unexpectedly and so surprisingly favourable to himself, that behind the natural causes, and working through them, his humility discerns the exceptional interposition of God. What the Protestant believes that God does, without any system, for individuals, the Roman theory teaches that He does systematically for the Church—immanent in the human materials of which the mystical body is composed; latent in the means; and apparent only in the results.

This action of the Spirit resembles what Mr. Herbert Spencer calls "fructifying causation."

Nor is there anything surprising in the fact that this immanent supernatural agency *should* be thus latent, and elude the observation of the historian; or should give, at all events, no indication of its presence, in any way proportionate to the magnitude of the results attributed to it. This is only what we should be led to expect from the analogy of ordinary organisms. Organic science, Mr. Herbert Spencer observes, introduces us to a conception which no other sciences furnish—"*the conception, namely, of what we may call fructifying causation.*" "*For,*" says Mr. Spencer, "*as it is a distinction between living and non-living bodies, that the first propagate while the*

second do not, it is also a distinction between them that certain actions which go on in the first are cumulative, instead of being, as in the second, dissipative." Thus, as he goes on to tell us, a "*portion of germinal matter, itself microscopic,*" works an effect, if introduced into a living organism, which an inorganic agent would not work if applied to an inorganic mass. The effect of the latter would be strictly proportionate to its amount. The effect of the former is not. "*By appropriating materials from the blood of the organism, and thus immensely increasing, it works effects altogether out of proportion to its amount as originally introduced — effects which may continue with accumulating power throughout the remaining life of the organism. . . . This,*" he continues, "*is a trait characteristic of organic phenomena. While from the destructive changes going on throughout the tissues of living bodies, there is a continual production of effects which lose themselves by subdivision, as do the effects of inorganic forces; there arise from those constructive changes going on in them, by which living bodies are distinguished from not-living bodies, certain classes of effect which increase as they diffuse—go on augmenting in volume as well as in variety.*"

It is easy, by aid of this analogy of what

happens in the body of the individual, to see how a particle of germinal matter, imperceptible to human observation, may be similarly operative in bodies of another kind; and how the fructifying causation of the Spirit in the mystical body of the Church, though the closest observation detect no direct trace of it, may none the less be as constant and as real as the action of some minute and untraceable portion of virus which, introduced into a man's system during the years of his early youth, will often produce, as Mr. Herbert Spencer says, disease or insanity in him half a century afterwards. The full significance, however, of the parallel that has just been indicated, between the Church as a living body, and those other bodies or organisms which form the subject-matter of sociological or biological science, has not yet been touched upon, and must be dealt with in a separate chapter.

CHAPTER XI

Of the teaching Church as a biological or sociological Organism.

We are now in a position to see,

It has already been said that one vital effect which the Roman theory has on our conception of the Christian Church, is to endow the Church with the character of a single living individual, whose memory reaches back to the beginnings of the Christian dispensation, and who has ever since then been increasing in comprehension of its meaning. In spite, however, of various observations to the contrary, this assertion may have seemed to the reader to be a mere figure of speech. Let me turn once more, therefore, to Mr. Herbert Spencer, and extract from him, for the reader's benefit, the following luminous passage :—

with Mr. Spencer's aid,

"*Figures of speech*," says Mr. Spencer, "*which often mislead by conveying the notion of complete likeness when only slight similarity exists, occasionally mislead by making an actual correspondence seem a fancy. A metaphor, when used to express a real resemblance, raises a suspicion of a mere*

imaginary resemblance, and so obscures the perception of intrinsic kinship. It is thus with the phrases 'body politic,' 'political organisations,' and others, which tacitly liken a society to a living creature: they are assumed to be phrases having a certain convenience, but expressing no fact—tending rather to foster a fiction. And yet metaphors are here more than metaphors in the ordinary sense. They are devices at first hit upon to suggest a truth at first dimly perceived, but which grows clearer the more carefully the evidence is examined. That there is a real analogy between an individual organism and a social organism becomes undeniable, when certain necessities determining structure are seen to govern them in common."

Mr. Spencer, it is true, points out elsewhere, that this analogy must not be pushed too closely; because these two types of organism, however real their similarity, will nevertheless present certain points of difference. It will be well, therefore, to observe that the analogy indicated in the last chapter, between the action in an individual body of a particle of germinal matter, and the action of the Spirit in the mystical body of the Church, was dwelt upon rather to show how the latter may take place conceivably, than to show, with any exactitude, that it does so take place actually. It

was dwelt upon to show, in answer to Protestant objectors, that there is in the Church, if the Roman theory be accepted, room for real and constant supernatural guidance, working through human agencies and human materials, but leaving in these proximate causes no direct trace of its presence. Particular analogies such as these may be in detail erroneous, or may require to be taken with very considerable qualifications; but none the less they are useful as helps to the imagination, preparing us to understand what is, by suggesting what perhaps may be. Nor do such errors in detail as these particular analogies may contain detract from the force and importance of the great truth that the general analogy between the individual organism and the social is more than a fancy, is more than an imaginary resemblance; that it is an analogy in the scientific sense; that is, an actual and vital correspondence.

that the Church of Rome is, scientifically, a single living organism,

The great fact which it is now necessary to elucidate, is one which, although it has been already more than suggested, has not as yet been directly and precisely stated. In the foregoing comparison of the Church to an individual organism, it has been assumed that what Mr. Spencer says of a social aggregate such as a nation, is equally applicable to a religious aggregate such as a Church. What we have hitherto been content to assume,

must now be examined and explained. Most people would describe the Church of Rome as an organisation. The great fact which has here to be impressed on the mind of the reader, is that the Church of Rome is not only an organisation, but is something more—that it is also an organism. These two words, even by Mr. Spencer himself, are often used with a looseness which does injustice to the clearness of his thought. He uses them very often as though their meaning were interchangeable; whereas no thinker has really done more than he to show that, when used strictly, they mean totally different things—things, indeed, which the ordinary man confuses, but which it is the first duty of the scientific sociologist to contrast.

not a mere organisation.

The expression, a social organisation, is generally used to mean a set of social arrangements devised, or supposed to have been devised, with deliberate purpose, by some ruler or group of rulers. A social organism, on the other hand, is a structure that grows unconsciously. It does not, indeed, grow without the wills and purposes of its members; but it does not, as a growing and structurally developing aggregate, represent the results that its members have willed and purposed. Its members have been purposing to do a thousand things, and have done them. But beyond these purposed results, and yet at the same time out of them, certain

It exhibits all the characteristics of a developing and highly developed organism—not of a structure planned by a human organiser.

common results arise which have not been purposed at all; and these results form the stages in the development of the social organism. As an example of this process, Mr. Spencer cites a phenomenon which makes its appearance in every developing community. This is the division of labour. The unscientific thinker, Mr. Spencer points out, regards the division of labour as the result of deliberate organisation on the part of some king or law-giver, who devises it out of his own head. The real cause of it, he says, is to be found in the natural and inevitable operation of local environment on the units of which the community is composed. Different localities, with their different natural products, are specially favourable to the production of different commodities; and thus there arises a localisation of different industries, each industry being prosecuted by a separate group of individuals. Division of labour having been thus established, there follows from it, in a similar way, a fresh succession of consequences; but neither these, nor the general institution of a division of labour itself, were consciously purposed, or even directly foreseen, by the individuals amongst whom that division at first developed itself. That the deliberate organisation of institutions or industries by individuals plays a part in the process of the growth of the social

organism, though lost sight of by some sociologists, still remains a fact; but the salient point on which Mr. Spencer insists is, that organic growth as a whole, though deliberate organisation may subserve it, is something beyond and distinct from anything that could be planned by the individual organiser. In other words, the growth of a social organism differs from the devising and establishment of any special organisation, in the fact that the succession of organic developments amongst the members takes place without any intention on their part of producing them.

The same thing holds good of the individual body. A man may intentionally do much that will injure his health or improve it, strengthen or cripple his limbs, sharpen or dull his faculties: but he cannot alter the course of his organic development generally; nor can he by taking thought add a single cubit to his stature. Beyond any developments which he may secure, or try to secure, for himself, there is a general organic development over which he has no control; which is the result of some principle or principles inherent in him as a human organism; and of which he is necessarily the subject, and not the author. In this sense it is that the Church of Rome, like any of the social aggregates whose development Mr. Spencer analyses, is more than an

organism—is more than a mechanical structure; and is literally and veritably an organism—a living and growing body.

We shall see, too, that Protestant Communions have a corporate life likewise.

The moment we arrive at this conception of the Roman Church, which is necessarily a new one, since, as Mr. Spencer shows us, it has emerged from modern developments of evolutionary organic science, we shall find that a variety of further conceptions follow from it; and its first result, as we analyse it more carefully, will be the new kind of comparison which it enables and indeed forces us to institute between the Church of Rome and the various types of Protestantism. For if that aggregate of Christians which we call the Church of Rome is an organism, and offers us an actual counterpart to the living matter of the biologist, all other aggregates of believers will, in some degree or other, offer us a counterpart to it, of a similarly actual kind: and the difference which we have here to notice between the Roman and the Protestant aggregates will not consist in the fact that the former is analogous to living matter, whilst the latter are not; but that they are analogous to it respectively in different stages of its development.

But biology

Now the stages of development in which living matter exhibits itself to us are of a well-defined character, constituting a rising scale, which begins

with life of the lowest kind, and rises gradually to life of the highest. The lowest kinds of life are, Mr. Spencer says, recognised as being the lowest, by the fact that, though living, they are not, in any strict sense, organic. They consist either of separate "*non-nucleated portions of protoplasm*," or of such portions joined together in a mass. The distinguishing characteristic of such a mass is, that the different parts of it are alike;—that, in Mr. Spencer's words, "*they similarly live and grow without aid from one another.*" The undifferentiated aggregate of protoplasm thus characterised, belongs, Mr. Spencer proceeds, "*to the lowest grade of living things. Without distinct faculties, and capable of but the feeblest movements, it cannot adjust itself to circumstances, and is at the mercy of environing destructive actions. The changes by which this structureless mass becomes a structured mass, having the character and powers possessed by what we call an organism, are changes through which its parts lose their original likenesses; and they do this while assuming the unlike kinds of activity for which their respective positions toward one another and surrounding things fit them. These differences of function, and consequent differences of structure, at first feebly revealed, slight in degree, and few in kind, become, as organisation progresses, definite and*

numerous; and in proportion as they do this, the requirements are better met."

and sociology show us living things arranged in a well-marked scale,

Having thus indicated the nature of the upward biological process, Mr. Spencer goes on to indicate its counterpart in the domain of sociology. "*Structural traits*," he says, "*expressible in the same language, distinguish lower and higher types of societies from one another; and distinguish the earlier stages of each society from the later.*" Thus he tells us that the undifferentiated masses of protoplasm are paralleled by the incoherent assemblages formed by the very lowest types of men. Then come tribes with slight contrasts of parts, but not contrasts which are established. There is an occasional interdependence of the members, but it is occasional only; as when in times of war there arises some chief or leader, whose special function ceases as soon as the war is over. But gradually, from various causes, the tribes grow severally larger; and as they grow larger, there arises a division of functions, which converts the original likeness between the members into unlikeness; and these unlikenesses become, by slow degrees, not only increasingly numerous, but also increasingly permanent. In proportion as they become permanent they result in a definite social structure. The incoherent aggregate is thus developed into an

organism; and as the differentiation of functioning parts continues, each part subserving the welfare of the common whole, the organism continues to rise in the organic scale.

Mr. Spencer has summed up these facts in his well-known formula, not at first sight very intelligible to the ordinary reader, which defines evolution as a sequence of progressive changes "*from homogeneous heterogeneity to heterogeneous homogeneity*"—that is to say, from an uncentralised collection of like particles, to a centralised structure of unlike particles.

and we shall find that the Protestant Communions correspond to the lowest grade of it.

And now let us apply these principles to aggregates of Christian believers, and we shall see how the Roman aggregate and the Protestant aggregates are related. We shall see which of them occupy the two ends of the scale. We shall see which, in a biological or sociological sense, is the highest; and which, in a biological or sociological sense, is the lowest. What we see will reverse, in a curious and interesting way, the ordinary judgment of those who, from a Protestant or non-Christian standpoint, are accustomed to flatter themselves that they view Christian doctrine scientifically. We shall see, by every analogy of sociological and biological science, that the Roman Church is at the highest end of the scale, and Low Church, Evangelical, or Intuitional Protest-

antism, at the lowest. In allocating these positions, there is nothing that is in the least arbitrary. We are merely following a clear scientific principle; for, on the one hand, the Church of Rome is, of all the Christian organisms, the one which exhibits the most permanent and most highly-differentiated structure; whilst, on the other hand, intuitional Protestantism is not an organism at all, but presents us with an exact counterpart to those masses of undifferentiated protoplasm which Mr. Spencer describes as forming "*the lowest grade of living things.*"

A group of purely Intuitional Protestants is like a mass of protoplasm,

Let us consider this point minutely. Let us take any group of Evangelical or Intuitional Protestants, and ask them, on their own principles, how they are held together? They are held together, we shall be told, because they believe in the same Gospel. And if we ask them why they hold this common belief, we shall be told that they hold it because each of them is led to it by the same evidence. But what is the nature of this evidence? We have asked this question before; and we have also seen how such Protestants themselves answer it. It is the evidence, they tell us, of "*the interior witness*"; of the voice of "*the Holy Ghost, the Remembrancer,*" speaking to the Christian's heart; of the "*verifying faculty of the Christian consciousness;* of "*the*

individual religious consciousness; or of the individual's "*own inmost experiences.*" Now it is impossible to imagine an analogy more complete than that which a body of Christians who derive their beliefs thus, and who cling together because their beliefs are similar, offers us to those masses of protoplasm of which we have just spoken. For what, according to Mr. Spencer, is their special, their distinguishing characteristic? It is this. "*All these parts of them similarly live and grow without aid from one another.*" Could any description be more accurate than this, of the manner in which, according to intuitional Protestantism, doctrinal beliefs are reached by the members of a Christian aggregate? The beliefs of each are arrived at, defined, and vouched for, by a process which is essentially confined to the inward consciousness of the individual, and consequently takes place in each without aid from the others.

There are two more characteristics of an aggregate such as this, by which its likeness to the lowest grade of biological life is emphasised. One of these is the fact that "*it cannot,*" as Mr. Spencer says of the undifferentiated aggregate of protoplasm, "*adjust itself to circumstances.*" The other is that, like life in its lowest grade, we find that it is multiplied by the simple process of fission.

or a tribe which occasionally exhibits an abortive tendency towards structure.

It is probable, however, that no aggregate of Protestants who profess to ground their beliefs solely on their own internal experiences, are so far true to their own principles always as not to seek aid sometimes, in establishing their belief, from others. We may venture to say, indeed, that no other class of Christians sets more store by preaching, or falls more readily under the influence of the personality of a rousing preacher. Here again we shall find an analogy in biological and sociological science. In the primitive tribe which has not yet become organic—in the undifferentiated mass of what we may call social protoplasm, we can, says Mr. Spencer, trace the first beginnings of a progress towards organic structure, which sometimes end at last in an organic structure being established; sometimes prove abortive, leaving the aggregate what it was. Of these beginnings, says Mr. Spencer, the best and most typical example is afforded by the undifferentiated aggregate when attacked by some other tribe. On such occasions, he says, "*there is a spontaneous and temporary subordination to those who show themselves the best leaders.*" But this subordination lasts only so long as the occasion lasts which happened to call it into existence, and when this occasion passes, the feature of leadership disappears. The aggregate becomes a mass of undifferentiated social protoplasm

as before. Precisely the same thing happens amongst certain Protestant bodies when the rousing, the edifying minister dies, or changes his congregation. The exceptional influence he has exercised, disappears with his personality, and does not form the beginning of any permanent institution by means of which a similar influence may be perpetuated.

Indeed Protestantism is essentially opposed to the development in organic life.

Of this analogy, as of one that was suggested in the last chapter, we must no doubt say that it is not to be pressed too closely; but due allowance being made for incidental differences, it remains, to a striking degree, substantially real and true; and it will be found to apply not only to strictly Evangelical bodies, but to all bodies of Protestants who, like the Bishop of Hereford, deny to the priestly class any powers or functions which essentially differentiate them from the mass of ordinary Christians. This denial, little as thinkers, and scholars, such as the Bishop of Hereford, suspect the fact, is really a systematic suppression, in all such Christian bodies as they influence, of even such rudiments of an organic structure as may develop themselves. Other Protestant bodies which reach or approach, in their teaching, some theory of a definite priestly class, represent a tendency to develop a structure of the kind in question; but the development is

constantly arrested, the tendency cannot fulfil itself, because some principle that makes for a complete structure is wanting; and the utmost we get is an organism of an abortive kind, deficient in power of selecting and assimilating nutriment, wanting in limbs and organs essential to healthy life, and endowed above all with a very imperfect consciousness.

On the other hand, Rome contains all the elements that make for, and result in, an organism of the highest and most enduring kind;

On the other hand, the features which are wanting in bodies of this description, are precisely the features which are conspicuous in the Church of Rome; and this is shown to us, not only by its present condition, but by the whole course of its historic development from the beginning. The history of the Church of Rome has never yet been attempted from what we may call the standpoint of the spiritual sociologist; and all that can here be done is to indicate, briefly and generally, the kind of aspect which, when thus examined, it will present to us. We shall find at the beginning the small and seemingly undifferentiated aggregate, with no definite nucleus, no acknowledged or permanent headship. Little by little we shall see a permanent headship, evolving itself; and along with this headship, and leading from it and up to it, an increasing variety of parts, whose differentiations become permanent also, each fulfilling some function complementary to the functions of the others,

and all unified by their connection with some common brain or sensorium. This common brain or sensorium with which all other parts are connected, is, of all Churches, possessed by the Church of Rome alone; and this fact itself is sufficient, when viewed from the sociological standpoint, to place that Church at the head of the organic scale, and to separate it, scientifically, from all other Christian bodies by an interval like that which, in the sphere of biology, separates the highest from the lowest orders of life.

The result which its possession of this complete organic character has on the Church of Rome as a teaching body, is obvious. Being thus endowed, as we have seen, with a single brain, the Church is endowed also with a continuous historic memory; is constantly able to explain and to re-state doctrine, and to attest, as though from personal experience, the facts of its earliest history. Is doubt thrown on the Resurrection and Ascension of Christ? The Church of Rome replies, "I was at the door of the Sepulchre myself. My eyes saw the Lord come forth. My eyes saw the cloud receive Him." Is doubt thrown on Christ's miraculous birth? The Church of Rome replies, "I can attest the fact, even if no other witness can; for the angel said Hail! in my ear as well as Mary's."

and by arriving at a recognition of itself, in this character of an organism, is preparing a reconciliation between itself and evolutionary science.

But the strength of the Roman position does not end here. Not only does Rome offer us generally the features of a complete organism, and along with them the extended knowledge and consciousness which invest it, as has just been shown, with an explicable doctrinal authority; but in addition to this the detailed history of its doctrines, and the materials out of which they have been shaped, indicate the means by which in future the Church as a teaching body, besides being reconciled with, may draw into its own service, that whole scientific philosophy which has seemed hitherto so opposed to it. We have seen already how much of Christian doctrine is traceable historically to non-Christian sources. We have seen how fatal is this fact to our acceptance of such doctrine as supernatural, if we content ourselves with Protestant theories, which deny to the Christian Church the character and capacities of a selecting and assimilating organism. We have seen also how, if the Roman theory be accepted by us, all this difficulty, so fatal to the Protestant, disappears. We have now to indicate briefly another aspect of the question. Just as the Church of Rome has absorbed Platonism in the doctrines of the Logos and of the Trinity, and has absorbed Aristotelianism in the doctrine of Christ's real presence in the

Eucharist, so we may naturally expect that, in its doctrine of its own nature, it will some day absorb formally, having long done so informally, the main ideas of that evolutionary philosophy which many people regard as destined to complete its downfall; and that it will find in this philosophy—in the philosophy of the Darwins, the Spencers, and the Huxleys—a scientific explanation of its own teaching authority, like that which is found in Aristotle for its doctrine of Transubstantiation.

But before we sum up these arguments, let us consider the Broad Churchmen, who maintain that Christianity has no need of doctrine at all.

Before, however, we complete and sum up our arguments on behalf of the Roman organism as the sole logical authority for Christianity as a doctrinal system, let us pause to consider the matter from a different point of view altogether. Let us pause to consider it from the point of view of those who maintain that doctrine and Christianity have no necessary connection; that doctrines may be discredited and Christianity yet endure; and, indeed, that it is destined, by the very process of discarding them, to enter on a period of purer and more complete development. In other words, let us turn back from the Roman Church to the Anglican, and consider the position of that one Anglican party which had, as we said before, to be reserved for separate treatment. Let us consider, that is to say, the position of our

Broad Churchmen. For if Christianity, as they offer it to us, really satisfies our desires, if we can still remain Christians whilst discarding dogma and doctrine, all our anxiety as to the authority for doctrine is superfluous.

We will endeavour to see whether such be the case or no.

CHAPTER XII

On the entire fallaciousness of the claim of Broad Church, or non-doctrinal Christianity, to have any real identity with the Christians of history and tradition.

Let us first ask if the Broad Church party is really independent of doctrine.

With regard to Broad Church Christianity we shall have to ask two questions: firstly, whether it is really, as it professes to be, independent of doctrine, or how far it is independent; and secondly, whether, in any serious and practical way, it does for men what is done for them by Christianity that is avowedly doctrinal, and whether it can consequently claim to be considered as the same religion.

If we judge it by the account the Broad Churchmen themselves give of it, we shall find that in certain respects it resembles the Christianity of their Low Church brethren. For it is offered us as being essentially a moral and spiritual system, the truth of which is vouched for by its own subjective fitness, and a personal insight which is developed in us by moral and spiritual education. It differs, however, from the Christianity of the Low Churchmen, in the fact that amongst the truths which

this personal insight attests, the Low Churchmen include a mass of supernatural doctrines, such, for example, as those of original sin and of the atonement; whilst the Broad Churchmen profess to regard these as matter of complete indifference —possessing perhaps some value as symbols, but forming no part of the true Christian faith, and not even needing discussion as statements of objective facts.

We shall find it composed of two sections,

We shall find, however, that having regard to the Broad Church party as a whole, we must not take such professions as these quite literally. We shall find that the Broad Church party is divided into two sections, one of which, in the discarding of doctrine, goes less far than the other; and the character of the division between them is very clearly indicated by the attitude which they adopt respectively as to one particular point. This point is the nature, human or superhuman, of Christ. One of the Broad Church sections, despite its contempt for theology—for the minute distinctions embodied in the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds—despite the demure indifference with which it gravely pushes into the background Christ's miraculous birth, his miracles, and his bodily Resurrection and Ascension, nevertheless distinctly holds and teaches that Christ was, in some sense or other, generically more than man. The other section, however they

may think it right to veil the fact, though it preaches and believes in Christ as the best of men and the highest, does not regard his nature as other than wholly human; and indeed maintains that his superiority to other men in degree, would lose the whole of its meaning if he were not one with them in kind.

one of which regards Christ as superhuman, the other as merely human;

Let us examine the position of the former of these sections first. The essential fact with regard to it which it is necessary to point out is this:—that however such doctrines as those of Christ's miraculous birth, of his eternal pre-existence, of his co-equality with the Father, of his being the Logos by whom the worlds were made, may be set aside by the teachers with whom we are now concerned, and silently denied by them as idle and obsolete speculations; yet so long as these persons maintain that in any objective sense, and in any way whatsoever, Christ differed in his nature generically from the nature of common men, that he still lives in a sense in which other dead men do not live, that he hears our voices when we pray to him as other dead men would not hear them, and that he cares for us and can help us in ways which to other dead men would be impossible—so long as these persons maintain, build upon, and insinuate any such propositions as these, their profession that they have liberated Christianity from the yoke of doc-

but the position of the former of these is utterly illogical,

trine is false. They are committed to a doctrinal system, different indeed in its details, but essentially the same in kind as that which is maintained by the Roman Church itself. Even if it contained this one proposition alone, that the nature of Christ was generically superhuman, the essence of it would be a proposition asserting the actuality of an event which in the first place was miraculous, and in the second place not demonstrable by ordinary proof; and so far as the difficulty of believing such an event is concerned, of defining and supporting it by any definite authority, it is a difficulty which is the same alike in degree and kind, whether one such event happens to be concerned, or a hundred. But the truth is, as we shall presently see more clearly, that a doctrine of this kind cannot stand by itself. If we seriously believe it, and let our thoughts steadily rest on it, we shall find that it implies others, and that it cannot be conceived distinctly unless these others are taken in connection with it. We shall find, for instance, that any assertion of Christ's superhuman nature implies a whole theory of supernatural revelation, and, in so far as such a doctrine differs from that of traditional Christianity, that it must, for the details it rejects, supply corresponding substitutes. We shall find, in fact, that so far as supernatural doctrine is concerned, the

more conservative section of the Broad Church party have merely exchanged one supernatural system for another; and that they differ from traditional Christians not in freeing themselves from doctrine, but in imagining they have done so; and in having, consistently with this conception of their position, rejected and deprived themselves of every possible argument by means of which such doctrines as they actually cling to might be defended.

Their position, therefore, with regard to the traditional Christians on the one hand, and Broad Churchmen of a more extreme type on the other, is a position yet more unstable, and logically far more helpless, than that which is occupied by either of their two neighbours. It has neither the stability that comes from an adherence to supernatural doctrine, nor the stability which comes from a systematic and complete rejection of it. It is specially unstable in its relation to the position of the extreme Broad Churchmen, who really have purged their religion of its supernatural elements, so far as to deny their presence even in the nature of Christ himself. The conservative Broad Churchmen are separated from these extremists merely by means of some such accidental friction as might temporarily prevent a body on an inclined plane from sliding down to the bottom, which ultimately

as can be shown by the arguments alike of Gibbon and Cardinal Newman;

it is sure to do. We all of us recollect the unanswerable argument of Gibbon, either for the credibility of the miracles attested by the Roman Church, or against the credibility of any, including those of the Gospels. "*Since every religious man is convinced of the reality of miracles, and since every reasonable man is convinced of their cessation,*" it becomes, he says, a nice point to determine at what precise period real miracles ceased. In the same way, if any Anglican thinker starts with the idea that Christianity should be freed from supernatural doctrine, on the ground that miracles are incongruous with the scheme of things as we know it, and that the whole supernatural economy is inaccessible to human knowledge, it is impossible for him to find any logical basis on which, whilst rejecting the supernatural doctrines generally, he can defend the retention of one, selected or invented by himself, and one which will necessarily imply a system or a series of others.

and it is the position of the latter section only that is worth discussing.

Broad Church Christianity, in fact, is hardly worth discussing, unless we take it in its fully-developed form—the form in which it is what it professes to be—namely, non-miraculous altogether; and the main question which thus we shall have to ask with respect to it, is whether or no it can be called Christianity at all. We might, of course, go on to

the further inquiry of whether, even if we have to answer this question in the negative, it may not be a substitute for Christianity, though it cannot claim to be a form of it; but this inquiry would be alien to the purpose of the present volume. Our sole purpose in the present volume is to ask, not what religion may be possible if the Christian religion is discarded, but on what grounds, if it is not discarded, it is to be defended—justified to ourselves, explained and commended to others. The question, then, to which we shall here confine ourselves is this—Does the Christianity set forth by the extreme Broad Church party merit the appellation of Christianity at all, in any sense other than one which might, no doubt, be justified by the plea that an old word etymologically might be endowed with a new meaning? If this Broad Church Christianity is really the same religion as the old doctrinal religion of which its advocates tell us that it is nothing more than the highest and purest development—if doctrine is in reality merely a husk or symbol, once a help, but now a useless encumbrance, which the essence of this religion can shed as a snake sheds its skin, or from which it can emerge as the butterfly emerges from the chrysalis, the whole of our previous inquiries as to the basis of doctrine are superfluous. Instead of asking ourselves how the truth of supernatural doctrine can

be maintained, we shall be satisfied with realising that, as Christians, we have no longer any reason for maintaining it. Our sole question is therefore, Is this supposition true? Does this Christianity of the extreme Broad Church party represent a development of Christianity in the old sense of the word, or an abandonment of it? A very little consideration will show us that it represents the latter.

Is the religion of this section Christianity at all?

In order to do it justice, let us first endeavour to look at it from the point of view of its advocates, and describe it as it would be described by them. It has been said already that it differs from Christianity of the doctrinal kind, in the fact that whilst doctrinal Christians, whatever may be their theories of the Bible, regard it as being in some sense the only inspired book, the extreme Broad Churchmen, though they still claim for it inspiration, regard it as being only the best of inspired books. All the great religious books of the world are, according to them, embodiments of a kind of natural inspiration. Nor is this judgment confined to religious books only. It is applied also to the religious life of nations. It is applied, in especial, to the Western nations—to Christendom; and the gradual development in Christendom of certain moral ideas and ideals is treated by the Broad Churchmen as a great objective fact.

They can make it seem at first sight to be so.

According to them, it is obvious to our moral and critical faculties, that the moral and spiritual development which Christian history presents to us is more complete, both with regard to the soul's relation to God, and the social relations of the individual citizen to the State, than any which has taken place amongst the non-Christian races. This historical development they regard as the true essence of Christianity, it being itself as independent of the doctrines which no doubt were amongst its proximate causes, as the possession of England by the English race to-day is independent of the Saxon and Norman Conquests; or as the knowledge of the East which Europe derived from the Crusades was independent of the enthusiasm in which the Crusades originated. And just as this development represents Christianity in the past, so will its further progress represent the Christianity of the future. To promote this progress is the essential work of the Church; and if the Church of to-day, in promoting it, rids itself of certain opinions, the connection of which with itself was never more than contingent, and which as knowledge advances become no longer tenable, it will be cementing rather than breaking its union with the Church of the past.

The position, as thus stated, has an air of considerable plausibility; but in order to see whether

it is really tenable or not, we must consider more closely what the exact meaning of it is. Any religion which adopts the moral teaching of another, may, with a certain plausibility, claim to be a continuation of it; and the kind of morality which is preached by our Broad Churchmen doubtless resembles that which is preached by the doctrinal Christians. But, in many points, it also resembles that which was preached by Buddha and by some of the Greek philosophers; and the question we have to ask is, how far this religion of the Broad Churchmen is identical with the Christianity of the past in any way essentially other than the way in which it is identical with that of the Buddhists, the Platonists, or the Stoics. In order to answer this question, let us consider the way in which their claim to be veritable Christians is expressed by Broad Churchmen themselves.

But does it resemble Christianity more than other religions?

Of this, one of the best examples is to be found in the words of a writer, who, though not nominally a member of the Broad Church party, has done more than any others to put the views of that party clearly, and who claims, at the same time, with almost passionate emphasis, to belong by rights to the English Church as truly as the extremest Ritualist who officiates in a cloud of incense, or the extremest Low Churchman who accuses the Ritualist of idolatry. I am once again

referring to Mrs. Humphry Ward; and her non-official position gives her the great advantage of being able to say, with perfect plainness and openness, what a surpliced and beneficed writer would, for various reasons, rightly feel himself constrained to express in a less downright manner. The following quotations are taken from the same essay as that previously referred to, in which she attacks the doctrinal position as lately set forth by Lord Halifax.

Mrs. Humphry Ward, whose position is identical with that of the extreme Broad Churchmen, attempts to show that it does.

Christianity, she says, like all other great movements "*which have carried men beyond the moral life into the region of religious faith or hope*," "*has been at bottom the influence of a man on men.*" The great work, therefore, of the non-doctrinal Church, or, as she calls it, the Church of "*the New Reformation*," is to go back to the man by whose influence the Church was originated; to think away "*the dogma and marvel*" with which the two first centuries have surrounded him; to come thus "*to the human reality which is at the root*"; and, having done this, to think out a new explanation of it, in accordance with the ideas of an age to which "*dogma and marvel*" are incredible. The result, she says, is to show us that "*such an influence* [as that of Christ] *upon man's mind and history cannot have arisen without special meaning in a world that issues from a*

divine thought and goodness. . . . The influence starts from a human life, but the life is more than appears. It is a symbol, a challenge, a divine word, by which, more conspicuously than through the ordinary process of moral education, God speaks to and calls the souls of men. The life of Jesus Christ was at the beginning, and is still, such a symbol and challenge. To be a Christian," she continues, "*is to adopt at once Christ's doctrine of God, and his view of the kind and nature of that life which leads to and reunites us with God. It is also to feel Christ as a Reconciler and Revealer. . . . It is to stand for Christ against the selfish and material elements of the world. It is to be tenderly and humbly eager to obey the few and simple directions he laid down for us as to the outward rites of his society or* ecclesia — *to partake of his memorial feast, as the symbol and food of our mystical union with him, with the brethren, and with God. . . . It is so to lead this life in his love and service that, when death comes, our dearest hope may be, that, beyond the darkness and storm of the great change, we shall, in some inconceivable way, find our Master, and yield our humble account to him, and know him at last more truly than ever Peter or John knew him on earth, in the presence and the light of God.*"

Such, says Mrs. Ward, being the beliefs of the party she represents, she and that party claim to be members of the Church of England, and entitled to participation in all its most sacred rites. All that she and they ask of their beloved Church is one act of relief which will ease their sensitive consciences—a relief which is nothing more than the simple non-requirement of any belief on their part in any of the Church's Creeds. She and her party claim, she says, to bring their infants to baptism, their boys and girls to confirmation, to be themselves partakers of the sacrament of Holy Communion. "*To us*," she continues, "*the Church forms are natural and dear. If we are driven out because the personal relief we claim is denied us, we go with a sense of wrong and exile, protesting in our Lord's name against a separation which is a denial of his spirit and an infringement of his commands.*"

She claims to be a member of the English Church, and demands its sacraments.

Now, that this profession of faith, and the assertion of this claim, represent some feeling which is altogether sincere on the part of Mrs. Ward, and of those who think with her, may be admitted. We may, indeed, be permitted to urge in passing, that if Mrs. Ward's conscience had only been as robust as that of the late Professor Jowett and not a few of his disciples, and if only Mrs. Ward had been not a woman but a man, she

might, instead of feeling herself an exile from the Church of England, be at this moment one of its most prominent clerics, and administering its sacraments, instead of complaining that she is excluded from them. On the other hand, we may observe also, that since she has made her opinions known with a directness which a Broad Church clergyman would wisely think unsuitable in himself, she could not reasonably expect that the doctrinal members of our Church, who, as she herself admits, still form the large majority of it, could possibly recognise her claim to be of the same religion as themselves, or to partake with them in the Christian sacrament of the altar. For they, rightly or wrongly, hold that their religion, and this sacrament in particular, are founded on nothing, or are else founded on the belief which Mrs. Ward absolutely denies—namely, the actual Godhead of Christ, and all the dogma and marvel which this belief brings with it. A belief of this kind cannot be a matter of indifference. It has either nothing to do with our religion, or it is the foundation of it. Mrs. Ward, therefore, can hardly be serious in imagining that persons who hold such a belief to be fundamental could, without being false to all their deeper convictions, admit as a co-religionist, some one who altogether denied them. She might as reasonably imagine that the Czar of Russia would

But she cannot reasonably expect that doctrinal Christians will admit the claim.

admit into his bodyguard a Nihilist who was convinced that he ought to be assassinated. We will not, however, dwell upon this aspect of her position. It will be enough for us to consider it exclusively from the point from which she herself views it. Let us then ask in detail, how, from her own point of view, her claims to be a Christian and a Churchwoman, as above stated, can be justified. What is the real meaning of this desire she professes and feels for baptism, confirmation, and the Eucharist; and the real meaning of her hope that she may, "*in the light of God*," render "*her humble account to the Master*" beyond the grave? Are this desire and this hope more than a sentiment inherited from the days when she believed what she now rejects? Have they any connection with the system and the principles she has now adopted? Do they grow out of them? Can they be justified by them? Are they not, rather, in direct contradiction to them?

Let us take what she says about the rites of Christ's Church first; and consider them in the light of her great fundamental principle that miracles do not happen, and that the reality which we find in Christ is a reality merely human. According to this principle, as Mrs. Ward herself admits, Christ becomes not the sole religious "*Revealer*," but only one out of many. He has

And her demand for the sacraments, though prompted by a sincere sentiment, is utterly inconsistent with her own principles;

merely done in a more satisfactory way what has been done for the world also by Mahomet, by Buddha, or Socrates. Now let us suppose that Socrates, as he drank the cup of hemlock, had asked his friends to celebrate the anniversary of his death by meeting together and drinking a cup of wine to his memory. Would Mrs. Ward maintain that, for a Greek, in subsequent ages, the drinking of such a cup of wine was essential in any way to an assimilation of the truths which animated the Socratic teaching? Would she venture to speak of it as "*the food of some mystical union*" with Socrates? She obviously would not. She would reject such language as an expression of the grossest superstition. Why then, if Christ was a mere man like Socrates, can our drinking to-day a cup of wine in his memory be in any way essential to our following his moral example, or be a vital assimilation of Christ's views of God? How can it be the food of any mystical union with him, any more than it can be the food of some mystical union with Socrates? How can it in any way be more essential to the Christian religion than eating plum-pudding at Christmas is essential to Christian good-will, or than eating goose at Michaelmas is essential to English patriotism?

as we shall see, if we take her demands one by one.

Mrs. Ward says that Christ enjoined this rite on us, and that he enjoined on us also the cognate

rite of baptism. This is true. But Mrs. Ward says also, that Christ being merely a man, many of his ideas belonged to his own age only. Amongst these, for example, were his ideas as to miracles, and the prophetic inspiration of the books of the Old Testament. Why, if we regard these ideas as no longer tenable, should we attribute to the ceremonial consumption of a little bread and wine, which had its origin in the celebration of the Jewish Passover, some eternal virtue essential to the Christian life? With regard to baptism the case is still stronger. Mrs. Ward points out, as has been twice mentioned already, that one of the strongest evidences of the natural origin of Christianity is the fact that "*it was, as a system of ideas, more than half in existence before the Lord lived and taught*"—that these ideas had sprung up between the close of the Hebrew Canon and the birth of Christ, as the result of "*popular speculation*," of the adaptation of Babylonian and Persian ideas, or the "*theosophic philosophising*" of the Greeks; and she adds that if subsequently men only had known this, "*they would not have trembled for ages under the eschatology of the Christian Church.*" Now, if any part of the Christian rule originated in strictly temporary and strictly local conditions, the rite of baptism so originated. Why then, if we reject the idea that

Christ was the Logos, coequal with God, as a piece of theosophic philosophising, are we to retain and regard as vital a ceremony which, if he was merely a Palestinian Jew, has no more meaning for us of the present day than the ceremony of holding a child's face under an ordinary tap of cold water. If it has any greater efficacy, in what does the efficacy reside? Does it reside in the making of a cross-mark on the child's forehead? Or in the muttering of some words during the performance? According to Mrs. Ward's principle that miracles never happen, the cross and the words can have no more spiritual virtue than what she herself repudiates as the hocus-pocus of the Mass. It is almost superfluous to ask similar questions with regard to the rite of confirmation, from which Mrs. Ward complains that adolescent professors of non-miraculous Christianity are excluded. It is necessarily part of her creed that the clergy have no special powers. What virtue then can by any possibility flow from the impact of a bishop's hand on the head of a young man or woman? If this ceremony brings with it any advantage at all, the hand of any one would do just as well as a bishop's. The "*relief*" which Mrs. Ward asks for it is in her own power to secure. Let her confirm the adolescent professors of her own religion herself.

Let us now turn from Mrs. Ward's Christian

demands for the present, to her Christian hopes for the future. She, on the ground that miracles do not happen, and that we find in Christ merely a human reality, denies the occurrence of the Resurrection; and yet it is part of her reconstructed and non-marvellous creed, that Christ hereafter will personally receive, in some future state, the "*humble account*" of herself, and presumably of every human being. Why is the belief that the human race will some day be judged by the mere son of a Galilean carpenter more reasonable, less dogmatic, and less marvellous, than the belief that it will be judged by the Word that was with God from the beginning? It is not only no less dogmatic and no less marvellous than this, but it is, moreover, inconsistent with every principle to the preaching of which Mrs. Ward and her party have devoted all their energies. As associated with these principles, it is a mere incongruous fancy, just as is the value she attributes to rites of the doctrinal Church. It is a fancy, no doubt, of which the origin is quite intelligible. It originates in the circumstances of Mrs. Ward's own education, and the education of her contemporaries by whom her religious principles are shared. They have all, or most of them, been nourished on the doctrines which they now reject, and accordingly associate them with many of their deepest feelings. "*To*

us," she says, "*Church forms are natural and dear.*" No doubt they are. But let a generation pass which has never been nourished on the doctrines of a doctrinal Church at all, but has, on the contrary, been nourished on a complete disregard and denial of them; and for Mrs. Ward's representatives, in the very near future, the naturalness and the dearness of these Church forms will have disappeared. Her representatives will recognise them as wholly inconsistent with the principles professed by her, and inherited and professed by themselves. They will cease to feel any desire for them; and they will no longer encumber their real beliefs, which are not hard to discriminate, with any of these fantastic, and to them meaningless, trappings.

All she can profess logically is a natural theism, specialised by a strong personal sympathy with Christ.

And now let us consider what their actual beliefs are—the sole beliefs which, if seriously they reject the miraculous, can be held by them. This is the point which really concerns us here. Let us consider them, and see if anything can be made out of them which is identical with Christianity as a moral and spiritual force, even if it differ from it in being not a doctrinal system. What they are has already been briefly specified; but let us state them over again, as they are to be gathered from Mrs. Ward herself. She sets them forth with an obvious and a passionate sincerity. They are as follows:—

Firstly, there is the doctrine, assumed as axiomatic, that there is a personal God, who takes cognisance of the lives of men, who demands from them a life in conformity with his own ethical nature, and who will adjust the destinies of men, in some future state of existence, according to their conformity to this standard, or their deviation from it.

Secondly, there is the doctrine, declared to be evidenced by history, that certain men have from time to time arisen—moral and spiritual geniuses—the conformity of whose characters to the divine standard has been exceptional, and whose lives have thus constituted for the rest of mankind a practical revelation of what the divine standard is, stimulating men to follow it, and guiding them thus to God.

Thirdly, there is the doctrine, that of these exceptional men, one—a certain Jew called Jesus—possessed a character more completely in accordance with the divine standard than did the rest; and that consequently it is his example, as distinct from and superior to theirs, which all those who would see God must follow. This third doctrine is based on the evidence of an alleged faculty of moral and spiritual intuition.

Now, whatever other doctrines Mrs. Ward may fancy she holds, these she holds undoubtedly.

But this religion lacks the two practical essentials of Chris-

tianity. It can neither speak with authority nor definiteness.

They are doctrines which are for her fundamental; and if she professes to hold any others that are inconsistent with these, they can be no part of her system. They are personal fancies of her own. To these fundamental doctrines we will therefore confine ourselves; and with regard to them let us at once start with conceding that they are not only consistent with one another, but may be assumed to be consistent with fact. The first doctrine is essential to all theistic religion; the second we may accept as attested by human history; and with regard to the third, we may admit the existence of this faculty of intuition which it postulates, and also the fact that this intuition reveals to us in Jesus certain qualities superior to those of other great moral teachers. Now, what we have here is a pure natural theism specialised by an association, which is based on personal insight, with the character and teaching of a particular human being, and also with the results which have historically resulted from his influence. The question for us is whether such a natural theism is so far identical with traditional and doctrinal Christianity, that, whilst discarding all its dogma and marvel, it can practically continue its work, moral and spiritual, in the world. If it can do this, we must recognise its claim as good. If it cannot do this, its claim is wholly illusory.

The question before us resolves itself into two distinct points. Any religion which, like that of Mrs. Ward and our extreme Broad Churchmen, professes to be more than a vague natural theism —which professes to be theism as expounded by a certain founder and leader, and distinct from theism as expounded by other founders and leaders, and to supply us before all things with a specific rule of life, must, if it is to fulfil its profession, be able to do two things. It must be able to enjoin on us its rule of life with authority, and it must be able to make the details of its rule of life definite. Let us begin with the question of authority.

A purely human Christ can be invested with no supremacy.

Mrs. Ward, in order to illustrate the position which her Christianity claims for Christ, refers us, as we have seen, to the influence, attested by history, which other religious teachers have exercised over other races. She forgets, however, that though these teachers may have been generically not more than ordinary men, they were supposed to have been more by the people and the races who were influenced by them. Buddha was regarded as miraculous in his very nature; Mahomet was regarded as the vehicle of miracle, being miraculously inspired by God: and however their teaching may, by its inherent qualities, have touched the sympathies of those who accepted it, it ruled and restrained their lives because, besides

touching their sympathies, it was supposed to have the sanction of supernatural revelation at the back of it. And as history shows, precisely the same thing has been true till now with regard to the teaching of Christ. His personal character, and his moral and spiritual teaching, have roused an emotional response in the hearts of those who believed in him: but this emotional response was accompanied and reinforced by a certain intellectual belief. This was a belief that, whilst touching in them a certain set of emotions, he was qualified to influence their lives by means of his supernatural knowledge that these emotions did, as an objective fact, vibrate in unique accordance with the character of the eternal God. Does Mrs. Ward suppose that this intellectual belief was merely an accidental feature of Christ's influence on mankind, and that the belief can be destroyed without the influence being affected? If she does, she must know very little of human nature, and very little of the functions that religion is called upon to fulfil.

The main function of any ethical religion is to call to repentance, not the righteous, but sinners. Christianity appeals to men, who have a sense in them that responds to the ideal of Christ; but they have other senses which respond to other ideals as well, and respond to them yet more

readily. The saving function of the Christian religion is to convince these men, not that Christ's philosophy of life is always more seductive than other philosophies—which it is not; but that it is true in a sense in which other philosophies are not true. Nor has it merely to convince us that a spiritual philosophy of life is more in harmony with what Mrs. Ward calls "*the central prevailing world-force*" than a philosophy which is purely sensual. It has to convince us that of many spiritual philosophies the Christian harmonises with the "*central prevailing world-force*" most completely. It has not only to show us that Christ's philosophy is truer than Théophile Gautier's. It has to show us that the hope of meeting a Jewish peasant hereafter, and rendering to him, somewhere and somehow, "*a humble account*" of our lives, is a hope which has a sounder objective basis than the hope of reaching, after many lives of self-discipline, the supreme rest and the supreme blessedness of *Nirvâna*.

Now how can Christianity, as Mrs. Ward conceives of it, possibly show us this? Mrs. Ward rejects the doctrine of Christ's descent into Hell. She says there is no objective evidence for it. "*Why should we believe it?*" she asks. We may with equal force ask her why we should believe that hereafter we shall all meet and render our

humble account to Christ—Christ who was, she insists, a mere mortal man like ourselves? In the same way we ask her why should we believe that Christ's philosophy of life is in any objective sense truer than that of Buddha to the ethical character of "*the central prevailing world-force*"? All she could say would be, "It happens to appeal more to my personal moral sense, and to that of a number of persons who were educated in the belief that it was supernatural." But a Buddhist saint would answer, "My moral sense is different. To my mind the philosophy that appeals most is Buddha's." Accordingly, if Mrs. Ward should still continue to assert that the Christian philosophy is objectively truer than the Buddhistic, the ultimate basis of her argument must necessarily be the assumption, not that Christ was generically superior to Buddha, but that Christians, in some mystical way, are generically superior to Buddhists.

But it is yet more pertinent to ask how Mrs. Ward would deal with a man—and there are many such—who, having been once, like herself, attracted by the Christian ideal, and having lived according to it, is subsequently attracted by another of a different, but not of a debased, kind—we will say such an ideal as is put before us by Goethe. How would she convince him that he has given an ideal up which is in harmony with the central world-

force, and has adopted an ideal which is not? If she and her backsliding friend believed that Christ was God, she would have solid ground on which to argue. She would be able to appeal to his knowledge that Christ's teaching was authoritative, even though her friend's emotions for the time might fail to respond to it; for Christ and the central world-force would, in that case, be identical. But if she and her friend both start with the assumption that Christ was merely a man, with no faculty for understanding the world-force different in kind from the faculties possessed by themselves, the moment Christ's teaching failed to satisfy her friend's tastes, the only ground on which she could urge him to continue to submit himself to it would be gone. She would be as helpless in dealing with him as she would be with the Buddhist saint.

The truth is that Christianity, as a guiding and restraining force, is at once most operative and most requisite, precisely on those occasions when the individual ceases to *feel* that Christ's teaching is attractive, and retains only an intellectual knowledge that it is true; and the sole logical fulcrum of the lever thus supplied him, is a conviction that Christ possessed some knowledge of things which was miraculously different from any that is accessible to mere men, and that he consequently spoke with an absolutely unique authority. But as soon as we take this

logical fulcrum away, the intellectual lever at once becomes inoperative. In that case, as Macaulay said with regard to this very subject, "*the philosopher labours; the world remains at rest.*" If under such circumstances we persist in maintaining that Christ's teaching is the absolute, and the sole absolute truth, the authority on which we make this assertion is transferred from him to ourselves. We believe in him because his views agree with our own; we do not believe in our own because they agree with his.

He can supply the moral lever with no fulcrum.

Of course, our belief in either case begins with a conviction of our own—an interior response in ourselves to his moral and spiritual teaching. But if we believe him to be a superhuman being as well as a human being, a second, an exterior authority comes back from him to ourselves, which meets and ratifies this authority of our own feelings; whilst if we believe him to be a human being only, this second, this ratifying authority altogether disappears. We are left with the witness of our own feelings, and of them alone. The difference between a belief in a miraculous Christ, and a belief in a Christ who is merely human, is this: that in the former case we get more out of our belief than we ourselves put into it; and in the latter case we get nothing out of it but what we ourselves put into it. Accordingly, if Mrs. Ward and her

Broad Church friends feel that Christ's teaching agrees with their own instincts and preferences, it is impossible to argue them out of these, any more than it would be possible to argue them out of any other tastes implanted or developed in them by their own temperaments or education. But they, on the other hand, must be always equally powerless to impress these tastes and preferences on others who do not share them. Their Christianity, when the supernatural element is subtracted from it, sinks from an authority calculated to rule the world, to a quasi-poetic symbol of the moral idiosyncrasies of a clique.

Nor will non-miraculous Christianity enable to deduce from it any fixed and certain rule of life;

But another point, equally important, still remains to be considered. Of the essential elements of traditional and doctrinal Christianity, authority is only one. Besides this there is another—namely, a definite rule of life. Is Mrs. Ward's Christianity capable of giving us this? If it is in any way identical with the old Christianity, it must be. It must be, indeed, if it is to do anything that Mrs. Ward claims it can do; for its essence is, as she herself insists, ethical. It exists to influence conduct, and its efficacy is revealed by the manner in which conduct is influenced by it. Now, though ethical feeling is vague, and difficult to define, rules for ethical conduct must of necessity be precise.

Let us take, for example, the Christian ethics of marriage, and the question of whether, and under what conditions, divorce is allowable. Even amongst orthodox Christians opinions as to this have differed; but the whole discussion amongst them has turned upon certain words of Christ, whose authority, when rightly interpreted, all parties agreed to be final. Christ said that Moses allowed divorce because of the hardness of men's hearts; "*but from the beginning it was not so.*" If Christ was the Word, who was in the beginning, and who was with God, and who was God, he spoke, when he said this, out of the fulness of a supernatural knowledge; and we must reverently deduce our own ethics of marriage from what he tells us. But if Christ was merely a man, he knew no more about "*the beginning*" than we do. He knew, indeed, much less. If we take the "*beginning*" in the natural sense of the word—the sense in which Christ, if he were a mere man, must have used it—we find that as we go back to the beginning, instead of getting to an indissoluble monogamy, we get to polygamy, to polyandry, and finally to conditions of society in which there was no marriage at all. If we start, then, with depriving Christ of all superhuman knowledge, how can we claim, firstly, that he was infallibly right in referring us to primitive practice as the

as the question of marriage and divorce will show us,

true standard of matrimonial ethics; and, secondly, that he was possessed of any knowledge whatever which enabled him to tell us what the primitive practice was? It is perfectly obvious that, as a foundation of the ethics of marriage, Christ's words, which, if we believe him to be God, are a rock, become, if he was only a man, a mere foundation of sand.

This question of the ethics of marriage is a type of all other ethical questions as related to Christ's teaching. Christ's teaching with regard to them, if we believe him to be merely a man, becomes equally vague, equally inconclusive. It becomes impossible to distinguish what is of permanent application in it from what was local, immediate, temporary. Some of his injunctions, certainly, had an immediate application only, such as the injunction to his disciples not to go from house to house, and to shake off the dust of their feet as a testimony against the towns that would not listen to them. Where, then, do the sayings with a temporary application end, and where do the sayings with a permanent application begin? How can we assume that any of them, in the form which Christ gave them, have a permanent application at all? "*If you would be perfect, sell all you have and give it to the poor, and come and follow me!*" Did this saying of Christ's apply only to the rich young

and others arising out of Christ's most distinctive utterances.

man at a particular crisis of his life, and under the special conditions of it? Or does it mean that a condition of voluntary poverty is for all time the most perfect condition for the rich, and that the most perfect use to which accumulated riches can be put is an impulsive distribution of them in indiscriminate charity? And if so, is there any reason why, if Christ were merely a man, we should consider such teaching as in any way binding on ourselves, when social conditions have become so widely different from anything that a mere human Christ could have dreamed of?

Some features of his teaching remain the same for everybody; but they are those which are least distinctive and least definite;

It is perfectly true that, however we read Christ's teaching, there are certain elements in it which always remain the same; but these are the elements which are least definite, and also least distinctive. They are elements which are common to other moral systems besides Christ's. As for what is special and distinctive in his teaching and in his personal character, no two people who regard him as a mere man come to any agreement, or can show the world conclusively what—to use Mr. Matthew Arnold's phrase—"*the secret of Jesus*" was. He seems one thing to Strauss, another to Renan, another to Mr. Matthew Arnold, another to Mr. Beattie Crozier. To one man he seems an example of systematic asceticism —the implicit patron of celibacy as a higher state

than marriage. To another he seems an example of cheerful and unaffected indulgence in such pleasures of the senses as naturally came in his way. In fact, neither in his teaching or example, if we regard him as a mere man, is it possible to attribute to any particular parts of it a distinct or distinctive meaning, or any absolutely permanent authority, or to prevent them all assuming the inevitable character of what M. Adolphe Sabbatier—a member of Mrs. Ward's school—calls "*historical contingency.*" The whole has to be restated, so as to bring it into relation with modern conditions of society and modern knowledge and culture, by means of a critical process far more complicated than the logic of any of the theologies, and incalculably more conflicting in its results than the logic of all the old theologies, orthodox and heretical, put together.

and as soon as they are translated into definite terms all agreement ceases.

Mrs. Ward, in her own person, illustrates this fact for us. In her interesting and thoughtful novel, *Helbeck of Bannisdale*, she declares that the new Christianity entirely changes the attitude of the Christian towards God, and raises him up from that position of personal "*abjection*" which centuries of spiritual experience had taught Christians to adopt. How can she maintain that her own view of this matter has an objective value any greater than theirs? How can the fact that she prefers a spiritual strut for herself do anything to prove that the

"*central prevailing world-force*" regards it as wrong for others to bow their heads? Finally, on what ground can Christians of Mrs. Ward's type maintain that it represents the last word with regard to our moral and spiritual life? On what grounds can they condemn any one for maintaining, that whilst some of it still is true, parts are by this time obsolete; that much of it is narrow and impracticable, and requires to be reinforced or superseded by teaching of a wider and different, though not necessarily of an opposite, kind? Numbers of sincere and by no means ignoble thinkers do, as a fact, maintain this precise position. What case has Mrs. Ward against them, not supplied by her own personal predilections? She has none—absolutely none; and Mrs. Ward is merely an exceptionally able, and, owing to her circumstances, an exceptionally outspoken, representative of the Broad Church Christianity which is sheltering itself within the Church of England.

The Christianity of the Broad Church party may be a religion of some kind; but, except in its assumed name, it is not Christianity at all.

That this so-called Christianity may constitute a religion of some kind, not less than does a pure natural theism, we need not dispute. We need not even discuss the question. All that it concerns us to observe here is that it has no identity with Christianity in the ordinary acceptation of the word. Not only has it no claim to the use of its rites and formulas, but it is absolutely lacking

in the two powers or qualities which, if not the heart of the old religion, were its vertebræ. It is totally unable to teach anything with authority; and if it were able to do so it would have nothing definite to teach. It is not that religion, because it is essentially unfitted to do any part of the old religion's work; and has no more warrant for clothing itself in the old name than it has for affecting still to attach some mystical value to the putting of a bishop's hands on the heads of boys and girls, or the splashing of some water on the faces of infants in long clothes.

CHAPTER XIII

Of two popular objections to the Roman theory of doctrine; and of the logical alternatives which, in respect of doctrine, are offered to the mind, under the intellectual conditions of to-day.

Members of the Broad Church party will not be argued out of their position; but this book is not addressed to them.

PERSONS who belong to, or who sympathise with, the so-called Christian party whose position has been just examined, will not be convinced by the arguments of the preceding chapter. And this is no more than natural. The very idiosyncrasies which have enabled them to regard their position as tenable, must render them proof against any exposition of its unsoundness. Having appreciated the essence of Christianity under its doctrinal form in their youth, they fancy they discern its presence in the void where doctrine is not, just as the eye which has stared long enough at some coloured diagram in an advertisement, will see the colour repeated on a surface of blank paper: but it is not to such persons that this volume is primarily addressed. It is primarily addressed to those who, being Christians or desiring to be so, believe that

Christianity divorced from its doctrinal system is nothing; and who, believing this, have been educated in the fold of the Church of England: whilst it is, in a secondary and consequential way, addressed to other Protestants who are virtually in this same position.

It is addressed to those who identify Christianity with doctrine; and the aim of the preceding chapter was to show them the strength of their position.

To such persons, it is hoped that this criticism of the Broad Church Christianity will suffice to show them with precision what they will naturally incline to assume, that this party is not a Christian party at all, in any sense which they themselves attach to the words: that it is a party composed, no doubt, of intellectual, cultivated, devout, and estimable persons, but of persons who are fighting mistakenly under colours which do not belong to them. It has been necessary to deal with it at some length here, but only in order to show that it is essentially not a party whose position comes within the scope of the main argument of this book. We will therefore put these non-doctrinal Christians aside, and return to our consideration of Christianity as a doctrinal system, assuming this to be the only kind of Christianity which excites our anxiety and interest, or really deserves the name.

Returning, then, to the great question of how doctrine is to be defined and substantiated,

Taking, then, the thread of our main argument up again, let us go back to the problem which has been our sole concern. It being assumed that Christianity stands or falls with the doctrines of

the supernatural inspiration of the Bible, the supernatural nature of Christ, of the historical character of the miracles recorded as incidental to his career, and of the objective and eternal truth of the theological propositions of the Creeds, the great problem for the Anglican of the present day is, on what reasonable, on what coherent authority, can he say to himself and others that these doctrines are true; and how, out of the conflicting forms which many of these doctrines have assumed, shall he be able to know the true forms from the false? For those outside the pale of the doctrinal Christian Communions, all these doctrines are a fabric built in the air; and for doctrinal Christians they are built in the air also, unless we are able to supply them with some consistent and coherent foundation which shall logically support the whole of them, and which, though not belonging to the natural order, shall be in touch with it. The old foundation once supplied by the Bible, as a book admittedly inerrant, will no longer support them. It is sapped and dissolved by the tides of advancing knowledge; and out of its dissolving elements emerges the supreme necessity for some other, some living witness, which may give its cohesion back to it, vouching for its authority and elucidating its hidden meanings. Unless we can find such a witness, the doctrinal

fabric collapses; and, according to our present assumption, our Christian faith is vain.

and to the need for some living witness,

Now once more let it be said that our belief in such a witness, if we can find it, must in any case be an act of faith. But so is a man's assent to the vaguest ethical theism. Our belief in the witness we ask for will be merely a reduplication of this process. The result, however, will be naturally more definite. The doctrines which we wish to substantiate are doctrines which have two sides. They not only, like a natural theism, appeal to our moral feelings; but they are of such a specific, of such an essentially unique kind, that they require, if we are seriously to hold them, a system of specific proofs. Our initial act of faith, therefore, in believing in this witness, must bifurcate in its results; on the one hand supplying us with the doctrines which touch the heart, and on the other hand substantiating and defining them by a strict appeal to the intellect.

we find that the witness must give us a set of doctrines that will appeal to our moral sense, and be also able to justify themselves to the intellect.

It has been the object of this volume to show that the doctrines in question can be discriminated, defined, and substantiated by one means only—namely, by means of a Church which is not a mere aggregate of undifferentiated units, but a living organism with a single enduring personality, always supernaturally and always infallibly guided; and the only Church which answers to this description

Anglicans are prejudiced against the Roman claims to be the required witness, by sentiment, and two other arguments.

is the Roman Church. For many reasons, however, to a large number of Anglicans this argument will be so distasteful that it will fail to carry conviction to them; and of these reasons one of the most important is to be found in that double character of Christian doctrines which we just now described. These doctrines, as taught within the English Church, have, in virtue of their appeal to the heart, obtained such a hold on a large number of Anglicans, that habit and sentiment make them shrink from accepting them in a different guise, quite apart from considerations of any change in their content. They consequently are averse from considering with an open mind any course of inquiry, or any train of reasoning, the result of which would be the adoption of a new intellectual standpoint, even though this should, for Christian doctrine generally, provide a secure foundation, not obtainable otherwise. With a feeling of this kind, as such, it is not possible to argue. The roots of it are very deep, and it must take time to eradicate them. But in addition to such feelings, there are certain intellectual arguments by which Anglicans generally endeavour to justify such feelings to themselves; and it can be very easily shown that these arguments are illusory.

These arguments are two in number; and are distinguishable, though closely connected. One is

the argument that the supernatural doctrines of Rome are of a character more repugnant to reason than the doctrines of doctrinal Protestantism; and that while the latter are accepted by a simple act of faith, the acceptance of the former as a whole requires an act of credulity. The other is an argument supposed to be in accordance with the saying of Christ, that if we would enter the Kingdom of Heaven, we must become as little children; and it is based on the assumption that, with respect to Christian doctrine, one test of truth is simplicity. Protestant doctrine is assumed to be simpler than that of Rome; therefore Roman doctrine is assumed to be less true than Protestant.

Shallower arguments than these it is hardly possible to conceive. The first of the two can be disposed of in very few words. It would be difficult to name two thinkers more strikingly unlike each other than Gibbon and Cardinal Newman; and yet these two both unite in insisting that if we consider the matter calmly on *a priori* grounds, Christian doctrine, as propounded by the Roman Church, is no more absurd or incredible than it is as propounded by Protestants; and that if credulity is required in order to assent to the one, just as much is required in order to assent to the other. If Protestants believe in the Virgin birth, and the Ascension, and the death of the

One is the argument that Roman doctrine as a whole is *per se* more incredible than Protestant doctrine; which is demonstrably absurd.

Very God of Very God on the Cross, there can be nothing inherently incredible in the marvel and dogma of the Mass. It is true that amongst Romanists, far more than amongst Protestants, Christian doctrine is accompanied by Christian legend; but half of the legends believed in in many Catholic countries are no more part of the authoritative Roman faith than the apocryphal gospels are part of the Roman Canon; and even those most calculated to make a Protestant smile, are absurd on account of their circumstances, not of their miraculous character. It is no more absurd to suppose that the Virgin may have appeared to a saint than it is to suppose that an angel appeared to the Virgin and announced to her that she was chosen to be the means of a miracle, compared with which all others sink into insignificance. It is needless here to continue this train of reflections. The reader may be safely left to continue and apply it for himself.

The other is that Protestant doctrine is simpler than Roman.

The second argument, however, against Roman doctrine as a whole—the argument based on the greater simplicity of Protestantism—demands somewhat fuller treatment, though it would be misleading to say that it deserved it. It is a familiar argument, advanced in every variety of phrase and tone. Even Protestants who believe firmly in supernatural doctrine are accustomed to

sneer at what they call masses of dogma, and to contrast the hair-splitting of theologians with the simple assertions of the Creeds. "*There exists,*" says a recent critic belonging to this school, "*a living Faith which could not be destroyed were the Church and her theology burned with fire*"; and he adds, referring to a writer who had expressed an opposite view, "*He cannot conceive a Christianity which is not a philosophy; yet there have flourished exemplars of the Faith who could not conceive a Christianity that was a philosophy, among them being no less a person than Christ himself.*" We need not multiply examples of the manner in which this view expresses itself. The utterance that has just been quoted will be quite sufficient for our purpose. We will not controvert at length the grotesque statement with which it ends. We will merely observe that Christ, in his assertion of his Messianic claims, in his application of prophecies to himself, and in the various statements made by him as to his own relation to the Father, connected his teaching with a philosophy of a most comprehensive kind. But whether he did this or no, is nothing to our purpose here. The point upon which it is necessary to insist here is that whether particular Christians associate a philosophy with Christianity or no, Christianity implies a philosophy none the less; and that,

though many "*exemplars of the Faith*" may have had no idea of the fact, they failed to have an idea of it, not because they were good Christians, but because at the same time they were feeble and bad philosophers. To say that because many good Christians know nothing of any philosophy of Christianity, therefore no philosophy or theology is necessarily and essentially implied in it, is about as wise as to say there can be no science of medicine, because many old women have dosed themselves with excellent effect, without having an idea that there could be any science of anything.

This adoption of simplicity as a test of religious truth is a result of the grossest ignorance.

What the advocates of religious simplicity really have in their minds is the fact that religion possesses one very simple side; that the mass of mankind can hardly understand any other; and that men may even be saints who understand exceedingly little of it. But in this respect religion is not peculiar. The process of eating and of walking, the practice of temperance, the going from Liverpool to New York in obedience to a call of duty, have a side which is simple in precisely the same way. But would any one in his senses, for this reason, say that medicine, anatomy, the whole physiology of the human body, are not implied in the process of eating and walking, and in the reasons which make more than a limited consumption of alcohol an immorality? Or would they

Those who argue thus, argue in effect that, because religion undoubtedly has a simple side, therefore it has no side that is not simple.

say that, because the process of going from Liverpool to America is so simple, therefore none of the complexities of the elaborate science of ship-building, of engine-building, and of navigation, are implied in this? Would they deny that the simplicity of one side of the process was the direct result of the extreme complexity of the other? Nobody, not a lunatic, would venture to talk such nonsense. And yet those who think that in doctrine simplicity is a test of truth, use an argument of a precisely similar character. Put in its simplest terms, the argument they use is this—that because religion has one simple side to it, therefore it is evident that it cannot have any other.

Every fact, however simple on one side, is infinitely complex in its relation to other facts.

Could any proposition be more monstrous? It is contrary to every analogy of science, experience, and the commonest of common-sense. In the physical world no fact is single; no fact stands by itself. It depends on countless others, and could not be a fact without them. It therefore ceases to be simple the moment we begin explaining it. In the spiritual world the same thing is true also. If once we admit, as doctrinal Christians do admit, that Christian doctrines, such as that, for instance, of Christ's divinity, represent objective facts, none of these facts stand alone. The adoration of Christ is an implied theology in itself, just as gravity is implied in the fact of an apple falling. When the intellect

sets to work on the data supplied by faith and feeling, doctrine after doctrine is slowly perceived to follow from them; just as from certain peculiarities in a seen planet's movement, the presence of a planet unseen has been argued, and at last demonstrated; or just as from the crossing of the Atlantic by a child in a Cunard steamship, we argue back to development of all those intricate sciences the coalition of which alone has made such a steamship possible. It is, of course, not necessary that every sailor on a Cunarder should himself understand these sciences, or even know the names of them. It is not necessary that even the officers should understand more than parts of parts of them. But if such sciences had never existed, a Cunarder would never have been built; and if they were not kept alive, and studied by proper persons—studied with intense application in all their endless minutiæ—the building of Cunarders, and the navigation of them, would be soon things of the past.

In the same way, it is not necessary that every Christian should be a profound theologian, or even know what theology means: but this does not prove that it is an idle or superfluous study. For, in the first place, men in whom the intellect is highly developed, the men who from all time have been the leaders of the human race, inevitably discern that in doctrine some science is implied,

just as mathematicians discern that a science is implied in numbers. Other men also discern the same thing; they are driven inevitably to ask what the contents of the science are; and the leaders of thought, by the needs of these others, and by their own, are compelled to seek an answer by which the demands of the intellect may be satisfied. But, in the second place, theology exists not merely to satisfy curiosity or the demand for speculative truth. It exists also, with all its many complexities, to prevent the doctrines—on one side so simple—from being disintegrated, from becoming distorted or nebulous; which, as the history of all heresy shows, they would do, unless they, and all that is implied in them, were examined, discerned, and analysed, and truth after truth reduced to definite and correlated formulæ. The idea, then, that theology of an elaborate kind has nothing to do with genuine Christian doctrine, because all the doctrines essential to Christianity are simple, is—to repeat an illustration of which we have made use already—on a par with the statement that medical science has no connection with healing, because it is a simple thing to take a cough-lozenge or a pill.

That an idea of this kind should be entertained by the absolutely ignorant, is not perhaps remarkable; but how it can be entertained and asserted, as it is, by many who are reasonable beings, must

The overlooking of this great truth is due sometimes to great personal devoutness.

at first sight seem difficult to explain. But, in many cases at all events, the explanation is easy, and it is creditable to the persons implicated. Christian doctrines fail to make any appeal to their heads, because they so deeply touch and so completely preoccupy their hearts. It may be better to be a Christian with the heart only than with the head—that is to say, so far as the individual Christian is concerned: but though the individual Christian may be saved without any aid from his intellect, doctrinal Christianity with no science or intellect at the back of it, would very soon be a religion without existence. That the theology of Rome, then, is more elaborate than that of Protestantism, does not prove that Roman Christianity is less pure than Protestant. It merely proves that at the back of it there is a system of more coherent and more continuous thought.

But it is a mischievous error notwithstanding.

The complexity of Roman theology is a sign of its scientific, rather than of its erroneous, character.

Having disposed, then, of these objections, let us sum up our arguments by repeating,

And now having disposed of these two familiar and popular objections to Roman Christianity, which haunt the Protestant mind, let us sum up, in conclusion, the arguments which have been already urged with regard to the nature of the authority by which alone, for the future, supernatural Christian doctrine can be defined in a coherent, and maintained in an intelligible, way.

that the only possible authority for supernatural Christian

The positive portion of our argument, put briefly, comes to this—that if supernatural doctrine

is to be maintained at all in a world which is robbing it one by one of what once seemed the objective proofs of it, whilst objective proofs of facts of another order multiply, it can be maintained only by the witness of a supernatural and living Organism, which, *in* this world, though not *of* it, conforms, in its organic growth, to the laws which this world exhibits, just as the Christian believes that the body of Christ conformed to them; and which, furthermore, vitalised by the Divine Spirit, slowly absorbs into itself the meaning of all natural knowledge, and converting it into its own substance, makes it supernatural knowledge, not by violating the processes of man's natural intellect, but by using them. In this way the witness which the supernatural Organism bears to the authority of the Biblical books, and the reality of Christ's miraculous nature and actions, exhibits itself to us as a witness similar to that of an individual who, being alive at the present day, was alive also when Christ lived, and, with eyes supernaturally opened, saw all the mysteries of his birth, life, death, resurrection, and return to Heaven, and perpetually re-attests their truth out of the fulness of an unerring memory.

doctrine is a Church which is an inspired and developed organism

And now there remains one fact more to be dwelt upon. It has been said already that the primary appeal of Christianity as offered us by

Such a Church cannot dispose of the cosmic arguments, which tell against all religions equally:

the Roman Church, no less than as offered us by intuitional Protestantism, is an appeal to some inward sense, some interior experience of the individual; the practical difference between the Romanist and the Protestant being this — that when the appeal is responded to, and the act of faith made for which the appeal pleads, the Protestant gets nothing in return for it but a set of isolated convictions, peculiar to himself, and differing, in the case of each, with each man's character, his education, and general circumstances; whilst the Romanist gets in return for it a doctrine which is the same for all, which never can lose a particle of what it has once comprehended in the past, and which, whilst remaining the same, is yet for ever developing.

Now whether it is possible for him to respond to this appeal seriously, and accept doctrinal Christianity as the Roman Church offers it to us, each man must decide for himself; and doubtless as knowledge widens, it reveals to us aspects of things which make such a response difficult. The apparent insignificance of this earth as compared with the rest of the universe, the enormous antiquity of mankind as compared with the Christian centuries, the evanescent character of mankind as measured by cosmic time, all tend to paralyse the action of Christian faith, and to interfere

with the idea that the Creator of all the worlds died for the sake of a swarm of ephemeral animals, crawling for a moment on the surface of this paltry pillule. They all suggest to us the question put by Tennyson :—

> *What are we more than the struggle of ants in the gleam of a million million suns?*

but these being set aside,

Objections of this kind, however, have throughout this volume been ignored, not because they are unimportant, but because if they are fatal to one religion they are equally fatal to all; and, as we have started with the assumption that it is worth our while to discuss the basis on which one particular religion can rest itself, we have, of necessity, assumed at the same time that these cosmic objections have in one way or other been disposed of. So much being granted, we have similarly assumed also—or rather we have partly assumed, and partly sought to demonstrate—that the particular religion in question is a religion carrying with it a body of supernatural doctrine. Our main question, therefore, has been the question of how this body of doctrine can be defined, guarded, and substantiated, and made to adapt itself to increasing human knowledge. And the answer, in the reaching of which it has been attempted to avoid entirely any appeal to emotion, association, or

and the need for doctrinal Christianity being granted, Rome appeals to the world, as a

living personal witness, a belief in whose veracity will carry a reasonable acceptance of the whole doctrinal system with it.

sentiment, is that that body of doctrine, in the face of increasing knowledge, can be supported and perpetuated only by the power of a corporate individuality, whose personality is, as Mr. Spencer's philosophy shows us, no mere metaphor, but an actual scientific fact. Now this personality, the organic Catholic Church, comes to the human soul, as one man might come to another, saying, "Study me, examine me, test me. Test me by considering what I can do for you. Test me by comparing with this what all other Churches fail to do, and then see if you can trust me. Do I appeal to your heart with less power than they? And do I not appeal with incomparably more power to your intellect?" In this manner it is that the Roman Church speaks, as a human Organism animated by a superhuman soul. The Spirit and the Bride say "Come"; but each human soul addressed by them must settle with itself whether it will accept their invitation or disregard it—must settle with itself whether the calling voice be a real voice, speaking the truth, or a mere singing in the hearer's ears.

If the evidence of Rome is discredited, no reasonable evidence of supernatural doctrine exists.

The aim of the present volume has been no more than this—to show the Protestant, and especially the Anglican Protestant, of to-day, bewildered by doubts and difficulties, that if this voice of the organic Church be illusory, all doctrinal Chris

tianity—the miracle of Christ's birth and death, the miracle of the Resurrection and of the Atonement, regarded as objective truths, are equally illusory also.

THE END

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